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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

CONVERSION AND APOSTLESHIP

OF

ST. PAUL.

IN A

LETTER

TO

GILBERT WEST, Esq

BY THE LATE RIGHT HON.

GEORGE LORD LYTTELTON.

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LETTER

TO

GILBERT WEST, Esq.

SIR,

In the late converſation we had together upon the ſubject of the Chriſtian religion, I told you, that beſides all the proofs, which may be drawn from the prophecies of the *Old Teſtament*, from the neceſſary connection it has with the whole ſyſtem of the *Jewiſh* religion, from the miracles of *Chriſt*, and from the evidence given of his reſurrection by all the other Apoſtles; I thought the Converſion and the Apoſtleſhip of St. *Paul* alone, duly conſidered, was of itſelf a demonſtration ſufficient to prove Chriſtianity to be a Divine Revelation.

As you ſeemed to think that ſo compendious a proof might be of uſe to convince thoſe unbelievers that will not attend to a longer ſeries of arguments, I have thrown together the reaſons upon which I ſupport that propoſition.

In the xxvith chapter of the *Acts of the Apoſtles*, writ by a contemporary author, and a companion of St. *Paul* in preaching the Goſpel, as appears by the book itſelf, ch. xx. ver. 6, 13, 14. xxvii. 1, &c. St. *Paul* is ſaid to have given himſelf this account of his converſion and preaching, to King *Agrippa* and *Feſtus* the *Roman* [illegible], nor: 'My manner of life from my own 'which was, at the firſt, among min*Jews*, 'nation at *Jeruſalem*, know all the; (if 'which knew me from the beginni[illegible]teſt 'they would teſtify) that after the ſtrict. 'ſect of our religion, I lived a ph the 'And now I ſtand and am judged [illegible] nto 'hope of the promiſe made by God our 'our fathers: unto which promiſ lay 'twelve tribes, inſtantly ſerving God ich 'and night, hope to come; for [illegible] 'hope's ſake, king *Agrippa*, I am ac[illegible]t 'by the *Jews*. Why ſhould it be th[illegible]g

'a thing incredible with you, that God
'ſhould raiſe the dead? I verily thought
'with myſelf, that I ought to do many
'things contrary to the name of *Jeſus* of
'*Nazareth*. Which things I alſo did in
'*Jeruſalem*, and many of the ſaints did I
'ſhut up in priſon, having received autho-
'rity from the chief prieſts; and when they
'were put to death, I gave my voice againſt
'them. And I puniſhed them oft in every
'ſynagogue, and compelled them to blaſ-
'pheme, and being exceedingly mad againſt
'them, I perſecuted them even unto ſtrange
'cities. Whereupon as I went to *Damaſcus*
'with authority and commiſſion from the
'chief prieſts at mid day, O King, I ſaw
'in the way a light from heaven, above the
'brightneſs of the ſun, ſhining round about
'me, and them which journeyed with me.
'And when we were all fallen to the earth,
'I heard a voice ſpeaking unto me, and
'ſaying in the *Hebrew* tongue, *Saul, Saul,*
'why perſecuteſt thou me? It is hard for
'thee to kick againſt the pricks. And I
'ſaid, Who art thou, Lord? And he ſaid,
'I am *Jeſus* whom thou perſecuteſt. But
'riſe, ſtand upon thy feet: for I have ap-

'peared unto thee for this purpoſe, to make
'thee a miniſter, and a witneſs both of thoſe
'things which thou haſt ſeen, and of thoſe
'things in the which I will appear unto
'thee; delivering thee from the people,
'and from the *Gentiles*, unto whom I now
'ſend thee, to open their eyes, and to turn
'them from darkneſs to light, and from the
power of Satan unto God, that they may
'receive forgiveneſs of ſins, and inheritance
'among them which are ſanctified by faith
'that is in me. Whereupon, O King
'*Agrippa*, I was not diſobedient to the hea-
'venly viſion: but ſhewed firſt unto them
'of *Damaſcus* and at *Jeruſalem*, and through-
'out all the coaſt of *Judea*, and to the *Gen-*
'*tiles*, that they ſhould repent and turn to
'God, and do works meet for repentance.
'For theſe cauſes the *Jews* caught me in
'the temple, and went about to kill me.
'Having therefore obtained help of God, I
'continue unto this day witneſſing both to
'ſmall and great, ſaying none other things
'than thoſe which *Moſes* and the prophets
'did ſay ſhould come: that *Chriſt* ſhould
'ſuffer, and that he ſhould be the firſt that
'ſhould riſe from the dead, and ſhould
'ſhew

'ſhew light to the people, and to the *Gen-*
'*tiles.* And as he thus ſpake for himſelf,
'*Feſtus* ſaid with a loud voice, *Paul*, thou
'art beſide thyſelf; much learning doth
'make thee mad. But he ſaid, I am not
'mad, moſt noble *Feſtus*, but ſpeak forth
'the words of truth and ſoberneſs. For
'the King knoweth of theſe things, before
'whom I alſo ſpeak freely; for I am per-
'ſuaded that none of theſe things are hidden
'from him; for this thing was not done in a
'a corner. King *Agrippa*, believeſt thou
'the prophets? I know that thou believeſt.
'—Then *Agrippa* ſaid unto *Paul*, almoſt
'thou perſuadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.
'And *Paul* ſaid, I would to God that not only
'thou, but alſo all that hear me this day,
'were both almoſt and altogether ſuch as
'I am, except theſe bonds*.' In another
chapter of the ſame book he gives in ſub-
ſtance the ſame account to the *Jews*, adding
theſe further particulars: 'And I ſaid,
'What ſhall I do, Lord? And the Lord
'ſaid unto me, Ariſe, and go into *Damaſcus*
'and there it ſhall be told thee of all things

* Acts xxii. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

'which are appointed for thee to do. And 'when I could not ſee for the glory of that 'light, being led by the hand of them that 'were with me, I came into *Damaſcus*. 'And one *Ananias*, a devout man accord-'ing to the law, having a good report of 'all the *Jews* that dwelt there, came unto 'me, and ſtood, and ſaid unto me, Brother 'Saul, receive thy ſight; and the ſame 'hour I looked up upon him. And he 'ſaid, the God of our fathers hath choſen 'thee, that thou ſhould'ſt know his will, 'and ſee that Juſt One, and ſhould'ſt hear 'the voice of his mouth. For thou ſhalt be 'his witneſs unto all men of what thou haſt 'ſeen and heard. And now why tarrieſt 'thou? Ariſe, and be baptized, and waſh 'away thy ſins, calling on the name of the 'Lord.'

In the IXth chapter of the ſame book, the author of it relates the ſame ſtory, with ſome other circumſtances not mentioned in theſe accounts: as, that *Saul in a viſion ſaw Ananias* before he came to him, *coming in, and putting his hand upon him that he might receive his ſight* *. And that when *Ananias*

* Acts ix. 12.

had

had ſpoken to him, *immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been ſcales* *.

And agreeably to all theſe accounts, St. *Paul* thus ſpeaks of himſelf in the epiſtles he wrote to the ſeveral churches he planted; the authenticity of which cannot be doubted without overturning all rules, by which the authority and genuineneſs of any writings can be proved, or confirmed.

To the *Galatians* he ſays: 'I certify 'you, brethren, that the goſpel which was 'preached by me is not after man. For I 'neither received it of man, neither was I 'taught it, but by the revelation of *Jeſus* '*Chriſt*. For ye have heard of my con-'verſation in time paſt in the *Jews* religion, 'how that beyond meaſure I perſecuted the 'church of God, and waſted it. And pro-'fited in the *Jews* religion above many 'mine equals in my own nation, being 'more exceedingly zealous of the tradi-'tions of my fathers. But when it pleaſed 'God, who ſeparated me from my mother's 'womb, and called me by his grace, to 'reveal his Son in me, that I might preach 'him among the heathen, immediately I 'conferred not with fleſh and blood, &c. †.'

* Acts ix. 18. † Gal. i. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

To the *Philippians* he ſays, 'If any other 'man thinketh that he hath whereof he 'might truſt in the fleſh, I more: circum-'ciſed the eighth day, of the ſtock of *Iſrael*, 'of the tribe of *Benjamin*, an *Hebrew* of 'the *Hebrews*. As touching the law, a '*Phariſee*; concerning zeal, perſecuting the 'church; touching the righteouſneſs which 'is in the law, blameleſs. But what things 'were gain to me, thoſe I counted loſs for '*Chriſt*. Yea doubtleſs, and I count all 'things but loſs for the excellency of the 'knowledge of *Chriſt Jeſus* my Lord, for 'whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, 'and do count them but dung, that I may 'win *Chriſt* *.'

And in his epiſtle to *Timothy* he writes thus: 'I thank *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord, who 'hath enabled me, for that he counted me 'faithful, putting me into the miniſtry, 'who was before a blaſphemer, and a per-'ſecutor, and injurious; but I obtained 'mercy, becauſe I did it ignorantly in unbe-'lief †.'

In other epiſtles he calls himſelf *an Apoſtle*

* Phil. iii. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. † 1 Tim. i. 12, 13.

by

*by the will of God, by the commandments of God our Saviour, and Lord Jeſus Chriſt:—and an Apoſtle not of men, neither by men, but by Jeſus Chriſt, and God the Father, who raiſed him from the dead**. All which implies ſome miraculous call that made him an Apoſtle. And to the *Corinthians* he ſays, after enumerating many appearances of *Jeſus* after his reſurrection, 'And laſt of all he was ſeen 'of me alſo, as of one born out of due 'time †."

Now it muſt of neceſſity be, that the perſon atteſting theſe things of himſelf, and of whom they are related in ſo authentick a manner, either was an impoſtor, who ſaid what he knew to be falſe with an intent to deceive; or he was an enthuſiaſt, who by the force of an over-heated imagination impoſed on himſelf; or he was deceived by the fraud of others, and all that he ſaid muſt be imputed to the power of that deceit; or what he declared to have been the cauſe of his converſion, and to have happened in conſequence of it, did all really happen; and

* 2 Cor. i. 1. Col. i. 1. 1 Tim. i. 1. Col. i. 1.
† 1 Cor. xv. 8.

therefore

therefore the Chriſtian religion is a divine revelation.

Now that he was not an impoſtor, who ſaid what he knew to be falſe with an intent to deceive, I ſhall endeavour to prove, by ſhewing that he could have no rational motives to undertake ſuch an impoſture, nor could have poſſibly carried it on with any ſucceſs by the means we know he employed.

Firſt then, the inducement to ſuch an impoſture muſt have been one of theſe two, either the hope of advancing himſelf by it in his temporal intereſt, credit or power; or the gratification of ſome of his paſſions under the authority of it, and by the means it afforded.

Now theſe were the circumſtances in which St. *Paul* declared his converſion to the faith of *Chriſt Jeſus*. That *Jeſus*, who called himſelf the *Meſſiah*, and Son of God, notwithſtanding the innocence and holineſs of his life, notwithſtanding the miracles by which he atteſted his miſſion, had been crucified by the *Jews* as an impoſtor and blaſphemer; which crucifixion not only muſt (humanly ſpeaking) have intimidated others from following him,

or

or eſpouſing his doctrines, but ſerved to confirm the *Jews* in their opinion that he could not be their promiſed Meſſiah, who according to all their prejudices was not to ſuffer in any manner, but to reign triumphant for ever here upon earth. His apoſtles indeed, though they at firſt appeared to be terrified by the death of their Maſter, and diſappointed in all their hopes, yet had ſurpriſingly recovered their ſpirits again, and publickly taught in his name, declaring him to be riſen from the grave, and confirming that miracle by many they worked, or pretended to work themſelves. But the chief prieſts and rulers among the *Jews* were ſo far from being converted either by their words or their works, that they had begun a ſevere perſecution againſt them, put ſome to death, impriſoned others, and were going on with implacable rage againſt the whole ſect. In all theſe ſeverities St. *Paul* concurred, being himſelf a Phariſee, *bred up at the feet of Gamaliel**, one of the chief of that ſect; nor was he content in the heat of his zeal with perſecuting the Chriſtians who were at *Jeruſalem*, but *breath-*

* Acts vii. 9, 22, 23.

ing

ing out threatening and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples of the Lord, went unto the high prieſt, and deſired of him letters to Damaſcus *to the ſynagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jeruſalem* *. His requeſt was complied with, *and he went to* Damaſcus *with authority and commiſſion from the high prieſt* †. At this inſtant of time, and under theſe circumſtances, did he become a Diſciple of *Chriſt*. What could be his motives to take ſuch a part? Was it the hope of increaſing his wealth? The certain conſequence of his taking that part was not only the loſs of all that he had, but of all hopes of acquiring more. Thoſe whom he left, were the diſpoſers of wealth, of dignity, of power in *Judea:* thoſe whom he went to, were indigent men, oppreſſed and kept down from all means of improving their fortunes. They among them who had more than the reſt, ſhared what they had with their brethren, but with this aſſiſtance the whole community was hardly ſupplied with the neceſſaries of life. And even in the Churches he afterwards planted

* Acts ix. 1, 2. † Acts xxvi. 12.

himſelf,

himſelf, which were much more wealthy than that of *Jeruſalem*, ſo far was St. *Paul* from availing himſelf of their charity, or the veneration they had for him, in order to draw that wealth to himſelf, that he often refuſed to take any part of it for the neceſſaries of life.

Thus he tells the *Corinthians*, 'Even unto 'this preſent hour we both hunger and thirſt, 'and are naked, and are buffeted, and have 'no certain dwelling-place, and labour, 'working with our own hands *.'

In another Epiſtle he writes to them, 'Behold the third time I am ready to come to 'you, and I will not be burthenſome to you, 'for I ſeek not yours but you; for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, 'but the parents for the children †.'

To the *Theſſalonians* he ſays, 'As we were 'allowed of God to be put in truſt with the 'Goſpel, even ſo we ſpeak, not as pleaſing 'men, but God, which trieth our hearts. 'For neither at any time uſed we flattering 'words, nor a cloak of covetouſneſs, God is 'witneſs; nor of men ſought we glory, nei-

* 1 Cor. xv. 8. † 2 Cor. xii. 14.

'ther

'ther of you, nor yet of others, when we 'might have been burthenſome, as the Apoſ-'tles of *Chriſt*. For ye remember, bre-'thren, our labour and travel: for labouring 'night and day, becauſe we would not be 'chargeable to any of you, we preached 'unto you the Goſpel of God *.' And again in another letter to them he repeats the ſame teſtimony of his diſintereſtedneſs: 'Neither 'did we eat any man's bread for nought, 'but wrought with labour and travel night 'and day, that we might not be chargeable 'to any of you †.' And when he took his farewel of the church of *Epheſus*, to whom he foretold that they ſhould ſee him no more, he gives this teſtimony of himſelf, and appeals to them for the truth of it; 'I have 'coveted no man's ſilver or gold, or apparel. 'Yea, you yourſelves know that theſe hands 'have miniſtered unto my neceſſities, and 'to them that were with me ‡.' It is then evident, both from the ſtate of the church when St. *Paul* firſt came into it, and from his behaviour afterwards, that he had no

* 1 Theſſ. ii. 4, 5, 6, 9. † 2 Theſſ. iii. 8.
‡ Acts xx. 33, 34.

thoughts

thoughts of increaſing his wealth by becoming a Chriſtian; whereas, by continuing to be their enemy, he had almoſt certain hopes of making his fortune by the favour of thoſe who were at the head of the *Jewiſh* ſtate, to whom nothing could more recommend him than the zeal which he ſhewed in the perſecution. As to credit or reputation, that too lay all on the ſide he forſook. The ſect he embraced was under the greateſt and moſt univerſal contempt of any then in the world. The chiefs and leaders of it were men of the loweſt birth, education, and rank. They had no one advantage of parts or learning, or other human endowments to recommend them. The doctrines they taught were contrary to thoſe, which they who were accounted the wiſeſt and the moſt knowing of their nation profeſſed. The wonderful works that they did, were either imputed to magic or to impoſture. The very author and head of their faith had been condemned as a criminal, and died on the croſs between two thieves. Could the diſciple of *Gamaliel* think he ſhould gain any credit or reputation by becoming a teacher in a college of fiſhermen? Could he flatter himſelf, that either in

or

or out of *Judea* the doctrines he taught could do him any honour? No; he knew very well that the *preaching Chriſt* crucified *was a ſtumbling-block to the* Jews, *and to the* Greeks *fooliſhneſs*. He afterwards found by experience, that in all parts of the world, contempt was the portion of whoever engaged in preaching a myſtery ſo unpalatable to the world, to all its paſſions and pleaſures, and ſo irreconcileable to the pride of human reaſon. *We are made* (ſays he to the *Corinthians*) *as the filth of the world, the off-ſcouring of all things unto this day*. Yet he went on as zealouſly as he ſet out, and *was not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt*. Certainly then the deſire of glory, the ambition of *making to himſelf a great name*, was not his motive to embrace Chriſtianity. Was it then the love of power? power! over whom? over a flock of ſheep driven to the ſlaughter, whoſe Shepherd himſelf had been murdered a little before. All he could hope from that power was to be marked out in a particular manner for the ſame knife, which he had ſeen ſo bloodily drawn againſt them. Could he expect more mercy from the chief prieſts and the rulers, than they had ſhewn to *Jeſus* himſelf? Would

Would not their anger be probably fiercer againſt the *deſerter* and *betrayer* of their cauſe, than againſt any other of the Apoſtles? Was power over ſo mean and deſpiſed a ſet of men worth the attempting with ſo much danger? But ſtill it may be ſaid, there are ſome natures ſo fond of power, that they will court it at any riſk, and be pleaſed with it even over the meaneſt. Let us ſee then what power Saint *Paul* aſſumed over the Chriſtians. Did he pretend to any ſuperiority over the other Apoſtles? No; he declared himſelf *the leaſt of them*, and *leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints**. Even in the churches he planted himſelf, he never pretended to any primacy or power above the other Apoſtles: nor would he be regarded any otherwiſe by them, than as the inſtrument to them of the grace of God, and preacher of the Goſpel, not as the head of a ſect. To the *Corinthians* he writes in theſe words: 'Now this I ſay, 'that every one of you ſaith, I am of *Paul*, 'and I of *Apollos*, and I of *Cephas*, and I of 'Chriſt. Is *Chriſt* divided? Was *Paul* cru'cified for you? Or were ye baptized in the

* Epheſ. iii. 8. 1 Cor. xv. 9.

'name

'name of *Paul**?' And in another place, 'Who then is *Paul*, and who is *Apollos*, but 'miniſters by whom ye believed, even as 'the Lord gave to every man? For we 'preach not ourſelves, but *Chriſt Jeſus* the 'Lord, and ourſelves *your ſervants* for *Jeſus* 'ſake†.'

All the authority he exerciſed over them was purely of a ſpiritual nature, tending to their inſtruction and edification, without any mixture of that civil dominion in which alone an impoſtor can find his account. Such was the dominion acquired and exerciſed through the pretence of Divine inſpiration, by many ancient legiſlators, by *Minos*, *Radamanthus*, *Triptolemus*, *Lycurgus*, *Numa*, *Zaleucus*, *Zoroaſter*, *Zamolxis*, nay even by *Pythagoras*, who joined legiſlation to his philoſophy, and, like the others pretended to miracles and revelations from God, to give a more venerable ſanction to the laws he preſcribed. Such, in later times, was attained by *Odin* among the *Goths*, by *Mahomet* among the *Arabians*, by *Mango Copac* among the *Peruvians*, by the

* 1 Cor. i. 12, 13. † 1 Cor. iii. 5. 2 Cor. iv. 5.

Soſi

Soſi family among the *Perſians*, and that of the *Xeriffs* among the *Moors*. To ſuch a dominion did alſo aſpire the many falſe Meſſiahs among the *Jews*. In ſhort, a ſpiritual authority was only deſired as a foundation for temporal power, or as the ſupport of it, by all theſe pretenders to divine inſpirations, and others whom hiſtory mentions in different ages and countries, to have uſed the ſame arts. But St. *Paul* innovated nothing in government or civil affairs; he meddled not with legiſlation, he formed no commonwealths, he raiſed no ſeditions, he affected no temporal power. Obedience to their rulers was the doctrine he taught to the churches he planted*, and what he taught he practiſed himſelf; nor did he uſe any of thoſe ſoothing arts by which ambitious and cunning men recommend themſelves to the favour of thoſe whom they endeavour to ſubject to their power. Whatever was wrong in the diſciples under his care, he freely reproved, as it became a teacher from God, of which numberleſs inſtances are to be found in all his Epiſtles. And he was as careful of them

* Rom. xiii.

when

when he had left them, as while he resided among them, which an impostor would hardly have been, whose ends were centered all in himself. This is the manner in which he writes to the *Philippians*: 'Wherefore, 'my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, 'not in my presence only, but now much 'more in my absence, work out your own sal-'vation with fear and trembling.' *Phil.* ii. 12. And a little after he adds the cause why he interested himself so much in their conduct, 'that ye may be blameless and harmless, the 'Sons of God in the midst of a crooked and 'perverse nation, among whom ye shine as 'lights in the world, holding forth the word 'of life; that I may rejoice in the days of '*Christ*; that I have not run in vain, neither 'laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered 'up on the sacrifice and service of your 'faith, I joy and rejoice with you all*.' Are these the words of an impostor desiring nothing but temporal power? No, they are vieuently written by one who looked beyond the bounds of this life. But it may be said, that he affected at least an absolute spiritual power over the churches he formed. I

* Phil. ii. 15, 16, 17.

answer

anſwer, *he preached Chriſt Jeſus and not himſelf. Chriſt* was the *head*, he only the *miniſter*, and for ſuch only he gave himſelf to them. He called thoſe who aſſiſted him in preaching the Goſpel, his *fellow-labourers and fellow-ſervants.*

So far was he from taking any advantage of a higher education, ſuperior learning, and more uſe of the world, to claim to himſelf any ſupremacy above the other Apoſtles, that he made light of all thoſe attainments, and declared, *that he came not with excellency of ſpeech or of wiſdom, but determined to know nothing among* thoſe he converted, *ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified* *. And the reaſon he gave for it was, *That their faith ſhould not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God.* Now this conduct put him quite on a level with the other Apoſtles, who knew *Jeſus Chriſt*, as well as he, and had the power of God going along with their preaching in an equal degree of virtue and grace. But an impoſtor, whoſe aim had been power, would have acted a contrary part? he would have availed himſelf of all thoſe advantages, he

* 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2, 5.

would have excelled them as highly as poſſible, he would have ſet up himſelf by virtue of them, as head of that ſect to which he acceded, or at leaſt of the proſelytes made by himſelf. This is no more than was done by every philoſopher who formed a ſchool; much more was it natural in one who propagated a new religion.

We ſee that the biſhops of *Rome* have claimed to themſelves a primacy, or rather a monarchy over the whole Chriſtian church. If St. *Paul* had been actuated by the ſame luſt of dominion, it was much eaſier for him to have ſucceeded in ſuch an attempt. It was much eaſier for him to make himſelf head of a few poor mechanicks and fiſhermen, whoſe ſuperior he had always been in the eyes of the world, than for the biſhops of *Rome* to reduce thoſe of *Ravenna* or *Milan*, and other great Metropolitans, to their obedience. Beſides the oppoſition they met with from ſuch potent antagoniſts, they were obliged to ſupport their pretenſions in direct contradiction to thoſe very Scriptures which they were forced to ground them upon, and to the indiſputable practice of the whole Chriſtian church for many centuries. Theſe

were

were ſuch difficulties as required the utmoſt abilities and ſkill to ſurmount. But the firſt preachers of the Goſpel had eaſier means to corrupt a faith not yet fully known, and which in many places could only be known by what they ſeverally publiſhed themſelves. It was neceſſary indeed while they continued together, and taught the ſame people that they ſhould agree, otherwiſe the credit of their ſect would have been overthrown; but when they ſeparated, and formed different churches in diſtant countries, the ſame neceſſity no longer remained.

It was in the power of St. *Paul* to model moſt of the churches he formed, ſo as to favour his own ambition: for he preached the Goſpel in parts of the world where no other Apoſtles had been, *where* Chriſt *was not named* till he brought the knowledge of him, avoiding *to build upon another man's foundation* *. Now had he been an impoſtor, would he have confined himſelf to juſt the ſame Goſpel as was delivered by the other Apoſtles, where he had ſuch a latitude to preach what he pleaſed without contradiction?

* Rom. xv. 20.

Would he not have twiſted and warped the doctrines of *Chriſt* to his own ends, to the particular uſe and expediency of his own followers, and to the peculiar ſupport and increaſe of his own power? That this was not done by St. *Paul*, or by any other of the Apoſtles, in ſo many various parts of the world as they travelled into, and in churches abſolutely under their own direction; that the Goſpel preached by them all ſhould be one and the ſame *, the doctrines agreeing in every

* If any one imagines that he ſees any difference between the doctrines of St. *James* and St. *Paul* concerning juſtification by faith or by works, let him read Mr. *Locke*'s excellent Comment upon the Epiſtles of the latter; or let him only conſider theſe words in the Firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, c. ix. v. 27. *But I keep under my body, and bring it into ſubjection, leſt that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myſelf ſhould be a caſt-away.*

If St. *Paul* had believed or taught, that faith without works was ſufficient to ſave a diſciple of *Chriſt*, to what purpoſe did he *keep under his body*, ſince his Salvation was not to depend upon *that*, being ſubject to the power of his reaſon, but merely upon the *faith* he profeſſed? His *faith* was firm, and ſo ſtrongly founded upon the moſt certain conviction, that he had no reaſon to doubt its continuance; how could he then think it poſſible that while

every particular, without any one of them attributing more to himſelf than he did to the others, or eſtabliſhing any thing even in point of order or diſcipline different from the reſt, or more advantageous to his own intereſt, credit, or power, is a moſt ſtrong and convincing proof of their not being impoſtors, but acting entirely by Divine inſpiration.

If, then, it appears that St. *Paul* had nothing to gain by taking this part, let us conſider, on the other hand, what he gave up,

while he retained that *ſaving faith*, he might nevertheleſs *be a caſt-away*? Or if he had ſuppoſed that his *election* and *calling* was of ſuch a nature, as that it *irreſiſtibly* impelled him to do good, and reſtrained him from evil, how could he expreſs any fear, leſt the luſt of his body ſhould prevent his Salvation? Can ſuch an apprehenſion be made to agree with the notions of abſolute predeſtination aſcribed by ſome to St. *Paul*? He could have no doubt that the *Grace of God* had been given to him in the moſt extraordinary manner; yet we ſee, that he thought his *election* was not certain, but that he might fall from it again through the natural prevalence of bodily appetites, if not duly reſtrained by his own voluntary care. This ſingle paſſage is a full anſwer out of the mouth of St. *Paul* himſelf, to all the miſtakes that have been made of his meaning in ſome obſcure expreſſions concerning grace, election, and juſtification.

and what he had reaſon to fear. He gave up a fortune which he was then in a fair way of advancing. He gave up that reputation which he acquired by the labours and ſtudies of his whole life, and by a behaviour which had been *blameleſs, touching the righteouſneſs which is in the law* *. He gave up his friends, his relations, and family, from whom he eſtranged and baniſhed himſelf for life. He gave up that *religion which he had profited in above many of his equals in his own nation*, and thoſe *traditions of his fathers, which he had been more exceedingly zealous of* †. How hard this ſacrifice was to a man of his warm temper, and above all men to a *Jew*, is worth conſideration. That nation is known to have been more tenacious of their religious opinions than any other upon the face of the earth. The ſtricteſt and proudeſt ſect among them was that of the Phariſees, under whoſe diſcipline St. *Paul* was bred. The departing therefore ſo ſuddenly from their favourite tenets, renouncing their pride, and from their diſciple becoming their adverſary, was a moſt difficult effort for

* Phil. iii. 6. † Gal. i. 14.

one

one to make, ſo nurſed up in the eſteem of them, and whoſe early prejudices were ſo ſtrongly confirmed by all the power of habit, all the authority of example, and all the allurements of honour and intereſt. Theſe were the ſacrifices he had to make in becoming a Chriſtian: let us now ſee what inconveniencies he had to fear: the implacable vengeance of thoſe he deſerted; that ſort of contempt which is hardeſt to bear, the contempt of thoſe whoſe good opinion he had moſt eagerly ſought; and all thoſe other complicated evils which he deſcribes in his 2d Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, chap. xi. Evils, the leaſt of which were enough to have frighted any impoſtor even from the moſt hopeful and profitable cheat. But where the advantage propoſed bears no proportion to the dangers incurred, or the miſchiefs endured, he muſt be abſolutely out of his ſenſes who will either engage in an impoſture, or, being engaged, perſevere.

Upon the whole then, I think I have proved that the deſire of wealth, of fame, or of power, could be no motive to make St. *Paul* a convert to *Chriſt*; but that on the contrary he muſt have been checked by that

deſire, as well as by the juſt apprehenſion of many inevitable and inſupportable evils, from taking a part ſo contradictory to his paſt life; to all the principles he had imbibed, all the habits he had contracted. It only remains to be enquired whether the gratification of any other paſſion under the authority of that religion, or by the means it afforded could be his inducement.

Now that there have been ſome impoſtors who have pretended to revelations from God, merely to give a looſe to irregular paſſions, and ſet themſelves free from all reſtraints of government, law, or morality, both ancient and modern hiſtory ſhews. But the doctrine preached by St. *Paul* is abſolutely contrary to all ſuch deſigns *. His writings breathe nothing but the ſtricteſt morality, obedience to magiſtrates, order and government, with the utmoſt abhorrence of all licentiouſneſs, idleneſs, or looſe behaviour, under the cloak of religion. We no where read in his works that ſaints are above moral ordinances; that dominion or property is founded in grace; that there is no difference in moral actions;

* *See particularly* Rom. xi. and xiii. and Col. iii.

that

that any impulſes of the mind are to direct us 'againſt the light of our reaſon and the laws of nature, or any of thoſe wicked tenets from which the peace of ſociety has been diſturbed, and the rules of morality have been broken by men pretending to act under the ſanction of a divine revelation. Nor does any part of his life, either before or after his Converſion to Chriſtianity, bear any mark of a libertine diſpoſition. As among the *Jews*, ſo among the *Chriſtians*, his converſation and manners were blameleſs. Hear the appeal that he makes to the *Theſſalonians* upon his doctrine and behaviour among them: 'Our 'exhortation was not of *deceit*, nor of *uncleanneſs*, nor in *guile*: ye are witneſſes, and 'God alſo, how *holily*, and *juſtly*, and *unblameably* we behaved ourſelves among 'you that believe.' 1 *Theſſ.* ii. 10*. †And to

* See alſo 2 Cor. i. 12. and iv. 2.

† If St. *Paul* had held any ſecret doctrines, or *eſoterick*, (as the philoſophers call them) we ſhould have probably found them in the letters he wrote to *Timothy*, *Titus*, and *Philemon*, his boſom friends, and diſciples. But the theological and moral doctrines are exactly the ſame in *them* as thoſe he wrote to the *churches*. A very ſtrong preſumptive

to the *Corinthians* he ſays, *We have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man*, 1 Cor. vii. 2.

It was not, then, the deſire of gratifying any irregular paſſion that could induce St. *Paul* to turn *Chriſtian*, any more than the hope of advancing himſelf either in wealth, or reputation, or power. But ſtill it is poſſible, ſome men may ſay, (and I would leave no imaginable objection unanſwered) that though St. *Paul* could have no ſelfiſh or intereſted view in undertaking ſuch an impoſture, yet for the ſake of its moral doctrines he might be inclined to ſupport the Chriſtian faith, and make uſe of ſome pious frauds to advance a religion, which, though erroneous and falſe in its theological tenets, and in the facts upon which it was grounded, was in its precepts and influence beneficial to mankind.

ſumptive proof of his being no impoſtor! Surely had he been one, he would have given ſome hints in theſe private letters of the cheat they were carrying on, and ſome ſecret directions to turn it to ſome worldly purpoſes of one kind or another: but no ſuch thing is to be found in any one of them. The ſame diſintereſted, holy, and divine ſpirit, breathes in all theſe, as in the other public epiſtles.

Now it is true that ſome good men in the *heathen* world have both pretended to Divine revelations, and introduced or ſupported religions they knew to be falſe, under a notion of public utility: but beſides that this practice was built upon maxims diſclaimed by the *Jews*, (who looking upon truth, not utility to be the baſis of their religion, abhorred all ſuch frauds, and thought them injurious to the honour of God) the circumſtances they acted in were very different from thoſe of St. *Paul*.

The firſt reformers of ſavage, uncivilized nations, had no other way to tame thoſe barbarous people, and bring them to ſubmit to order and government, but by the reverence which they acquired from this pretence. The fraud was therefore alike beneficial both to the deceiver and the deceived. And in all other inſtances which can be given of good men acting this part, they not only did it to ſerve good ends, but were ſecure of its doing no harm. Thus when *Lycurgus* perſuaded the *Spartans*, or *Numa* the *Romans*, that the laws of the one were inſpired by *Apollo*, or thoſe of the other by *Egeria*, when they taught their people to put great

faith in oracles, or in augury, no temporal miſchief either to them or their people could attend the reception of that belief. It drew on no perſecutions, no enmity with the world. But at that time when St. *Paul* undertook the preaching of the Goſpel to perſuade any man to be a *Chriſtian*, was to perſuade him to expoſe himſelf to all the calumnies human nature could ſuffer. This St. *Paul* knew; this he not only expected, but warned thoſe he taught to look for it too, 1 *Theſſ.* iii. 4. 2. *Cor.* vi. 4, 5. *Eph.* vi. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. *Phil.* i. 28, 29, 30. *Col.* i. 9, 10, 11. *Rom.* viii. 35, 36. The only ſupport that he had himſelf, or gave to them, was, 'That if they *ſuffered* with *Chriſt*, 'they ſhould be alſo glorified *together*.' And that 'he reckoned that the ſufferings of the 'preſent time were not worthy to be com-'pared *with that glory*.' *Rom.* viii. 17, 18. So likewiſe he writes to the *Theſſalonians*: 'We ourſelves glory in you, in the churches 'of God for your patience and faith in all 'your perſecutions and tribulations that you 'endure; which is a manifeſt token of the 'righteous judgment of God, that ye may 'be counted worthy of the kingdom of God,

'for

'*for which alſo ye ſuffer.* Seeing it is a righ-
'teous thing with God to recompenſe [or
'pay] tribulation to them that trouble you;
'and to you who are troubled, reſt with us,
'*when the Lord* Jeſus *ſhall be revealed from*
'*Heaven, with his mighty angels,*' &c. 2
Theſſ. i. 4, 5, 6, 7. And to the *Corinthians* he ſays, '*If in this life only we have hope in*
'*Chriſt, we are of all men the moſt miſerable.*'
How much reaſon he had to ſay this, the hatred, the contempt, the torments, the deaths endured by the Chriſtians in that age, and long afterwards, abundantly prove. Whoever profeſſed the Goſpel under theſe circumſtances, without an entire conviction of its being a Divine revelation, muſt have been mad; and if he made others profeſs it by fraud or deceit, he muſt have been worſe than mad; he muſt have been the moſt hardened wretch that ever breathed. Could any man who had in his nature the leaſt ſpark of humanity, ſubject his fellow-creatures to ſo many miſeries; or could one that had in his mind the leaſt ray of reaſon, expoſe himſelf to ſhare them with thoſe he deceived, in order to advance a religion which he knew to be falſe, merely for the ſake of its moral doctrines?

trines? Such an extravagance is too abſurd to be ſuppoſed; and I dwell too long on a notion that upon a little reflection confutes itſelf.

I would only add to the other proofs I have given, that St. *Paul* could have no rational motive to become a Diſciple of *Chriſt*, unleſs he ſincerely believed in him, this obſervation: that whereas it may be objected to the other Apoſtles, by thoſe who are reſolved not to credit their teſtimony, that having been deeply engaged with *Jeſus* during his life, they were obliged to continue the ſame profeſſions after his death, for the ſupport of their own credit, and from having gone too far to go back, this can by no means be ſaid of St. *Paul*. On the contrary, whatever force there may be in that way of reaſoning, it all tends to convince us that St. *Paul* muſt naturally have continued a *Jew*, and an enemy of *Chriſt Jeſus:* if they were engaged on one ſide, he was ſtrongly engaged on the other. If ſhame with-held them from changing ſides, much more ought it to have ſtopt him, who, being of a higher education and rank in life a great deal than they, had more credit to loſe, and muſt be ſuppoſed to have been vaſtly

vaſtly more ſenſible to that ſort of ſhame. The only difference was, that they, by quitting their Maſter after his death, might have preſerved themſelves; whereas he, by quitting the *Jews*, and taking up the croſs of *Chriſt*, certainly brought on his own deſtruction.

As therefore no rational motive appears for St. *Paul*'s embracing the faith of *Chriſt* without having been really convinced of the truth of it: but on the contrary, every thing concurred to deter him from acting that part; one might very juſtly conclude, that when a man of his underſtanding embraced that faith, he was in reality convinced of the truth of it, and that, by conſequence, he was not an impoſtor, who ſaid what he knew to be falſe with an intent to deceive.

But that no ſhadow of doubt may remain upon the impoſſibility of his having been ſuch an impoſtor; that it may not be ſaid, 'The minds of men are ſometimes ſo capri-'cious, that they will act without any rati-'onal motives, they knew not why, and ſo 'perhaps might St. *Paul*;' I ſhall next endeavour to prove, that if he had been ſo unaccountably wild and abſurd, as to undertake an impoſture ſo unprofitable and dangerous, both to himſelf and thoſe he deceived by it,

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he could not poſſibly have carried it on with any ſucceſs, by the means that we know he employed.

Firſt then let me obſerve, that if his converſion, and the part that he acted in conſequence of it, was an impoſture, it was ſuch an impoſture as could not be carried on by one man alone. The faith he profeſſed, and which he became an Apoſtle of, was not his invention. He was not the author or beginner of it, and therefore it was not in his power to draw the doctrines of it out of his own imagination. With *Jeſus* who was the author and head of it, he had never had any communication before his death, nor with his Apoſtles after his death, except as their perſecutor. As he took on himſelf the office and character of an Apoſtle, it was abſolutely neceſſary for him to have a preciſe and perfect knowledge of all the facts contained in the Goſpel, ſeveral of which had only paſſed between *Jeſus* himſelf and his twelve Apoſtles, and others more privately ſtill, ſo that they could be known but to very few, being not yet made public by any writings; otherwiſe he would have expoſed himſelf to ridicule among thoſe who preached that Goſpel

with

with more knowledge than he; and as the teſtimony they bore would have been different in point of fact, and many of their doctrines and interpretations of Scripture repugnant to his, from their entire diſagreement with thoſe *Jewiſh* opinions in which he was bred up; either they muſt have been forced to ruin his credit, or he would have ruined theirs. Some general notices he might have gained of the matters from the Chriſtians he perſecuted, but not exact nor extenſive enough to qualify him for an Apoſtle, whom the leaſt error in theſe points would have diſgraced, and who muſt have been ruined by it in all his pretenſions to that inſpiration, from whence the Apoſtolical authority was chiefly derived.

It was therefore impoſſible for him to act this part but in confederacy at leaſt with the Apoſtles. Such a confederacy was ſtill more neceſſary for him, as the undertaking to preach the Goſpel did not only require an exact and particular knowledge of all it contained, but an apparent power of working miracles; for to ſuch a power all the Apoſtles appealed in proof of their miſſion, and of the doctrines they preached. He was therefore

to

to learn of them by what ſecret arts they ſo impoſed on the ſenſes of men, if this power was a cheat. But how could he gain theſe men to become his confederates? Was it by furiouſly perſecuting them and their brethren, as we find that he did, to the very moment of his converſion? Would they venture to truſt their capital enemy with all the ſecrets of their impoſture, with thoſe upon which all their hopes and credit depended? Would they put it in his power to take away not only their lives, but the honour of their ſect, which they preferred to their lives, by ſo ill-placed a confidence? Would men, ſo ſecret as not to be drawn by the moſt ſevere perſecutions to ſay one word which could convince them of being impoſtors, confeſs themſelves ſuch to their perſecutor, in hopes of his being their accomplice? This is ſtill more impoſſible than that he ſhould attempt to engage in their fraud without their conſent and aſſiſtance.

We ſuppoſe then, that till he came to *Damaſcus*, he had no communication with the Apoſtles, acted in no concert with them, and learnt nothing from them except the doctrines which they had publickly taught to all the

the world. When he came there, he told the *Jews*, to whom he brought letters from the high prieſt and the ſynagogue againſt the Chriſtians *, and his having ſeen in the way a great light from heaven, and heard *Chriſt Jeſus* reproaching him with his perſecution, and commanding him to go into the city, where it ſhould be told him what he was to do. But to account for his chuſing this method of declaring himſelf a convert to *Chriſt*, we muſt ſuppoſe that all thoſe who were with him when he pretended he had this viſion, were his accomplices. Otherwiſe, the ſtory he told could have gained no belief, being contradicted by them whoſe teſtimony was neceſſary to vouch for the truth of it. And yet, how can we ſuppoſe, that all theſe men ſhould be willing to join in this impoſture? They were probably officers of juſtice, or ſoldiers, who had been employed often before in executing the orders of the high prieſt and the rulers againſt the Chriſtians. Or if they were choſen particularly for this expedition, they

* The Diſciples of *Chriſt* were not called Chriſtians till after this time: but I uſe the name as moſt familiar to us, and to avoid circumlocutions.

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muſt have been choſen by them as men they could truſt for their zeal in that cauſe. What ſhould induce them to the betraying that buſineſs they were employed in? Does it even appear that they had any connection with the man they ſo lyed for, before or after this time, or any reward from him for it? This is therefore a difficulty in the firſt outſet of this impoſture not to be overcome.

But farther, he was to be inſtructed by one at *Damaſcus*. That inſtructor therefore muſt have been his accomplice, though they appear to be abſolute ſtrangers to one another, and though he was a man of an excellent character, *who had a good report of all the* Jews *that dwell at* Damaſcus, and ſo was very unlikely to have engaged in ſuch impoſture. Notwithſtanding theſe improbabilities, this man, I ſay, muſt have been his confident and accon plice in carrying on this wicked fraud, and the whole matter muſt have been previouſly agreed on bet ween them. But here again the ſame objection occurs: How could this man venture to act ſuch a dangerous part without the conſent of the other Diſciples, eſpecially of the Apoſtles, or by what means could he obtain their conſent?

ſent? And how abſurdly did they contrive their buſineſs, to make the converſion of *Saul* the effect of a miracle, which all thoſe who were with him muſt certify did never happen? How much eaſier would it have been to have made him be preſent at ſome pretended miracle wrought by the diſciples, or by *Ananias* himſelf, when none were able to diſcover the fraud, and have imputed his converſion to that, or to the arguments uſed by ſome of his priſoners whom he might have diſcourſed with, and queſtioned about their faith, and the grounds of it, in order to colour his intended converſion?

As this was the ſafeſt, ſo it was the moſt natural method of bringing about ſuch a change; inſtead of aſcribing it to an event which lay ſo open to detection. For (to uſe the words of St. *Paul* to *Agrippa*) this *thing was not done in a corner* *, but in the eye of the world, and ſubject immediately to the examination of thoſe who would be moſt ſtrict in ſearching into the truth of it, the *Jews* at *Damaſcus*. Had they been able to bring any ſhadow of proof to convict him of fraud in this affair, his whole ſcheme of im-

* Acts xxvi. 26.

poſture

poſture muſt have been nipt in the bud. Nor were they at *Jeruſalem*, whoſe commiſſion he bore, leſs concerned to diſcover ſo provoking a cheat. But we find that many years afterwards, when they had all the time and means they could deſire to make the ſtricteſt enquiry, he was bold enough to appeal to *Agrippa**, in the preſence of *Feſtus*, upon his own knowledge of the truth of his ſtory; who did not contradict him, though he had certainly heard all that the *Jews* could alledge againſt the credit of it in any particular. A very remarkable proof both of the notoriety of fact, and the integrity of the man, who with ſo fearleſs a confidence could call upon a *king* to give teſtimony for him, even while he was ſitting in judgment upon him.

But to return to *Ananias*. Is it not ſtrange, if this ſtory had been an impoſture, and he had been joined with *Paul* in carrying it on, that after their meeting at *Damaſcus* we never ſhould hear of their conſorting together, or acting in concert, or that the former drew any benefit from the friendſhip of the latter, when he became ſo conſiderable among the Chriſtians? Did *Ananias* engage and continue

* Acts xxvi. 26.

in

in ſuch a dangerous fraud without any hope or deſire of private advantage? Or was it ſafe for *Paul* to ſhake him off, and riſk his reſentment? There is, I think, no other way to get over this difficulty, but by ſuppoſing that *Ananias* happened to die ſoon after the other's converſion. Let us then take that for granted, without any authority either of hiſtory or tradition, and let us ſee in what manner this wondrous impoſture was carried on by *Paul* himſelf. His firſt care ought to have been, to get himſelf owned, and received as an Apoſtle by the Apoſtles. Till this was done, the bottom he ſtood upon was very narrow, nor could he have any probable means of ſupporting himſelf in any eſteem or credit among the diſciples. Intruders into impoſtures run double riſks; they are in danger of being detected, not only by thoſe upon whom they attempt to practice their cheats, but alſo by thoſe whoſe ſociety they force themſelves into, who muſt always be jealous of ſuch an intruſion, and much more from one who had always before behaved as their enemy. Therefore, to gain the Apoſtles, and bring them to admit him into a participation of all their myſteries, all their

deſigns,

deſigns, and all their authority, was abſolutely neceſſary at this time to *Paul*. The leaſt delay was of dangerous conſequence and might expoſe him to ſuch inconveniences as he never afterwards could overcome*. But inſtead of attending to this neceſſity, he went into *Arabia*, and then returned again to *Damaſcus;* nor did he go to *Jeruſalem* till three years were paſt.

Now this conduct may be accounted for, if it be true that (as he declares in his epiſtle to the *Galatians* †) 'he neither received the 'Goſpel of any man, neither was he taught 'it, but by the revelation of *Jeſus Chriſt*.' Under ſuch a maſter, and with the aſſiſtance of his divine power, he might go on boldly without any human aſſociates; but an impoſtor, ſo left to himſelf, ſo deprived of all hope, all ſupport, all recommendation, could not have ſucceeded.

Further; we find that at *Antioch* he was not afraid to *withſtand* Peter *to his face*, and even to *reprove him before all the Diſciples, becauſe he was to be blamed* ‡. If he was an im-

* Gal. i. 17, 18. † Gal. i. 12. ‡ Gal. ii. 11, 14.

poſtor,

poſtor, how could he venture to offend that Apoſtle whom it ſo highly concerned him to agree with, and pleaſe? Accomplices in a fraud are obliged to ſhew greater regards to each other; ſuch freedom belongs to truth alone.

But let us conſider what difficulties he had to encounter among the *Gentiles* themſelves, in the enterprize he undertook of going to *Them*, making himſelf *their Apoſtle*, and converting *Them* to the religion of *Chriſt*. As this undertaking was the diſtinguiſhing part of his apoſtolical functions, that which, in the language of his Epiſtles, he was particularly *called to;* or which, to ſpeak like an unbeliever, he choſe and aſſigned to himſelf, it deſerves a particular conſideration: but I ſhall only touch the principal points of it as conciſely as I can, becauſe you have in a great meaſure exhauſted the ſubject in your late excellent book on the reſurrection, where you diſcourſe with ſuch ſtrength of reaſon and eloquence upon the difficulties that oppoſed the propagation of the Chriſtian religion in all parts of the world.

Now in this enterprize St. *Paul* was to contend, *1ſt*, With the policy and power of

the magiſtrates; *2dly*, With the intereſt, credit, and craft of the prieſts; *3dly*, With the prejudices and paſſions of the people; *4thly*, With the wiſdom and pride of the philoſophers.

That in all heathen countries the eſtabliſhed religion was interwoven with their civil conſtitution, and ſupported by the magiſtrates as an eſſential part of the government, whoever has any acquaintance with antiquity cannot but know. They tolerated indeed many different worſhips, (though not with ſo entire a latitude as ſome people ſuppoſe) as they ſuffered men to diſcourſe very freely concerning religion, provided they would ſubmit to an exterior conformity with the eſtabliſhed rites; nay, according to the genius of paganiſm, which allowed an intercommunity of worſhip, they in moſt places admitted, without any great difficulty, new gods and new rites; but they no where endured any attempt to overturn the eſtabliſhed religion, or any direct oppoſition made to it, eſteeming that an unpardonable offence, not to the gods alone, but to the ſtate. This was ſo univerſal a notion, and ſo conſtant a maxim of heathen policy, that when the Chriſtian religion ſet itſelf up

up in oppoſition to all other religions, admitted no intercommunity with them, but declared that the gods of the Gentiles *were not to be worſhipped,* nor any ſociety ſuffered between them and the *only true God;* when this new doctrine began to be propagated, and made ſuch a progreſs as to fall under the notice of the magiſtrate, the civil power was every way armed with all its terrors againſt it. When therefore St. *Paul* undertook the converſion of the *Gentiles,* he knew very well, that the moſt ſevere perſecutions muſt be the conſequence of any ſucceſs in his deſign.

Secondly, This danger was rendered more certain by the oppoſition he was to expect from the intereſt, credit, and craft of the prieſts. How gainful a trade they, with all their inferior dependents, made of thoſe ſuperſtitions which he propoſed to deſtroy; how much credit they had with the people as well as the ſtate by the means of them, and how much craft they employed in carrying on their impoſtures, all hiſtory ſhews. St. *Paul* could not doubt that all theſe men would exert their utmoſt abilities to ſtop the ſpreading of the doctrines he preached; doc-

trines which ſtruck at the root of their power and gain, and were much more terrible to them than thoſe of the moſt atheiſtical ſect of philoſophers, becauſe the latter contented themſelves with denying their principles, but at the ſame time declared for ſupporting their practices, as uſeful cheats, or at leaſt acquieſced in them as eſtabliſhments authorized by the ſanction of law. Whatever therefore their cunning could do to ſupport their own worſhip, whatever aid they could draw from the magiſtrate, whatever zeal they could raiſe in the people, St. *Paul* was to contend with, unſupported by any human aſſiſtance.

And *Thirdly*, This he was to do in direct oppoſition to all the prejudices and paſſions of the people. Now had he confined his preaching to *Judea* alone, this difficulty would not have occurred in near ſo great a degree. The people there were ſo moved by the miracles the Apoſtles had wrought, as well as by the memory of thoſe done by *Jeſus*, that in ſpite of their rulers, they began to be favourably diſpoſed toward them; and we even find that the high-prieſt * and

* Acts iv. 21. and v. 26.

the

the council had more than once been withheld from treating the Apoſtles with ſo much ſeverity as they deſired to do, *for fear of the people.* But in the people among the *Gentiles* no ſuch diſpoſitions could be expected: their prejudices were violent, not only in favour of their own ſuperſtitions, but in a particular manner againſt any doctrines taught by a *Jew.* As, from their averſion to all idolatry, and irreconcileable ſeparation from all other religions, the *Jews* were accuſed of hating mankind, ſo were they hated by all other nations: nor were they hated alone, but deſpiſed. To what a degree that contempt was carried, appears as well by the mention made of them in *heathen* authors, as by the complaints *Joſephus* makes of the unreaſonableneſs and injuſtice of it in his apology. What authority then could St. *Paul* flatter himſelf that his preaching would carry along with it, among people to whom he was at once both the object of national hatred and national ſcorn? But, beſides this popular prejudice againſt a *Jew*, the doctrines he taught were ſuch as ſhocked all their moſt ingrafted religious opinions. They agreed to no principles of which he could avail himſelf,

to procure their aſſent to the other parts of the Goſpel he preached. To convert the *Jews* to *Chriſt Jeſus*, he was able to argue for their own ſcriptures, upon the authority of books which they owned to contain Divine Revelations, and from which he could clearly convince them, that *Jeſus was the very Chriſt*. But all theſe ideas were new to the *Gentiles;* they expected no *Chriſt* *, they allowed no ſuch *ſcriptures*, they were to be taught the *Old Teſtament* as well as the *New*. How was this to be done by a man not even authorized by his own nation: oppoſed by thoſe who were greateſt, and thought wiſeſt among them; either quite ſingle, or only attended by one or two more under the ſame diſadvantages, and even of leſs conſideration than he?

The light of nature† indeed, without expreſs revelation, might have conducted the Gentiles to the knowledge of one God the creator of all things, and to that light St. *Paul* might appeal, as we find that he did ‡. But clear as it was, they had almoſt put it

* Acts ix. 22. † Acts xiv. 17. xvii. 17, 28.
‡ Rom. i. 23, 25

out

out by their ſuperſtitions, *having changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beaſts, and creeping things, and ſerving the creature more than the Creator.* And to this idolatry they were ſtrongly attached, not by their prejudices alone, but by their paſſions, which were flattered and gratified in it, as they believed that their deities would be rendered propitious, not by virtue and holineſs, but by offerings, and incenſe, and outward rites; rites which dazzled their ſenſes by magnificent ſhows, and allured them by pleaſures often of a very impure and immoral nature. Inſtead of all this, the Goſpel propoſed to them no other terms of acceptance with God but a worſhip of him *in ſpirit and truth*, ſincere repentance, and perfect ſubmiſſion to the Divine laws, the ſtricteſt purity of life and manners, and renouncing of all thoſe lufts in which they had formerly walked. How unpalatable a doctrine was this to men ſo given up to the power of thoſe luſts, as the whole heathen world was at that time! If their philoſophers could be brought to approve it, there could be no hope that the people would reliſh it, or exchange the

eaſe and indulgence which thoſe religions they were bred up in allowed to their appetites, for one ſo harſh and ſevere. But might not St. *Paul*, in order to gain them, relax that ſeverity? He might have done ſo, no doubt, and probably would, if he had been an impoſtor: but it appears by all his epiſtles, that he preached it as purely, and enjoined it as ſtrongly, as *Jeſus* himſelf.

But ſuppoſing they might be perſuaded to quit their habitual ſenſuality for the purity of the Goſpel, and to forſake their idolatries, which St. *Paul* * reckons amongſt *the works of the fleſh*, for the *ſpiritual* worſhip of the *one inviſible God*, how were they diſpoſed to receive the doctrine of the Salvation of man by the croſs of *Jeſus Chriſt*? Could they, who were bred in notions ſo contrary to that *great myſtery*, to that *hidden wiſdom of God, which none of the princes of this world knew* †, incline to receive it againſt the inſtructions of all their teachers, and the example of all their ſuperiors? Could they whoſe Gods had almoſt all been powerful kings and mighty con-

* Gal. v. 19, 20. † 1 Cor. i. 7, 8.

querors,

querors, they who at that very time paid divine honours to the Emperors of *Rome*, whoſe only title to Deification was the imperial power; could they, I ſay, reconcile their ideas to a crucified *Son of God*, to a *Redeemer of mankind* on the croſs? would they look there for him *who is the image of the inviſible God, the firſt-born of every creature: by whom and for whom were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers*?* Now, moſt ſurely, *the natural man*, (to ſpeak in the words of St. *Paul?* *received not theſe things for they are fooliſhneſs to him; neither could he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned* †. I may therefore conclude, that in the enterpriſe of converting the *Gentiles*, St. *Paul* was to contend not only with the policy and power of the magiſtrates, and with the intereſt, credit, and craft of the prieſts; but alſo with the prejudices and paſſions of the people.

I am next to ſhew, that he was to expect no leſs oppoſition from the wiſdom and pride

* Coloſſ. i. 15, 16. † 1 Cor. ii. 14.

of the philoſophers. And though ſome may imagine, that men who pretend to be raiſed and refined, above vulgar prejudices and vulgar paſſions, would have been helpful to him in his deſigns, it will be found upon examination, that inſtead of aſſiſting or befriending the Goſpel, they were its worſt and moſt irreconcileable enemies. For they had prejudices of their own ſtill more repugnant to the doctrines of *Chriſt* than thoſe of the vulgar, more deeply rooted, and more obſtinately fixed in their minds. The wiſdom upon which they valued themſelves, chiefly conſiſted in vain metaphyſical ſpeculations, in logical ſubtleties, in endleſs diſputes, in high-flown conceits of the perfection and ſelf-ſufficiency of human wiſdom, in dogmatical poſitiveneſs about doubtful opinions, or ſceptical doubts about the moſt clear and certain truths. It muſt appear at firſt ſight, that nothing could be more contradictory to the firſt principles of the Chriſtian religion, than thoſe of the Atheiſtical or Sceptical ſects, which at that time prevailed very much, both among the *Greeks* and the *Romans*; nor ſhall we find that the Theiſtical ſects were much leſs at enmity with it, when we conſider the doctrines

doctrines they held upon the nature of God and the ſoul.

But I will not enlarge on a ſubject * which the moſt learned Mr. *Warburton* has handled ſo well. If it were neceſſary to enter particularly into this argument, I could eaſily prove, that there was not one of all the different philoſophical ſects then upon earth, not even the *Platonicks* themſelves, who are thought to favour it moſt, that did not maintain ſome opinions fundamentally contrary to thoſe of the Goſpel. And in this they all agreed, to explode as moſt unphiloſophical, and contrary to every notion that any among them maintained, that great article of the Chriſtian religion, upon which the foundations of it are laid, and without which St. *Paul* declares to his proſelytes, *their faith would be vain* †, the reſurrection of the dead with their bodies, of which reſurrection *Chriſt* was the *firſt-born* ‡. Beſides the contrariety of their

* See the divine legations of *Moſes*, l. iii. See alſo a late pamphlet, entitled, A Critical Enquiry into the Opinions and Practice of the ancient Philoſophers, concerning the Nature of the Soul, and a future State.

† 1 Cor. xv. 17, 20. ‡ Col. i. 18.

tenets to thoſe of the Goſpel, the pride that was common to all the philoſophers, was of itſelf an almoſt invincible obſtacle againſt the admiſſion of the evangelical doctrines, calculated to humble that pride, and teach them that *profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe they became fools* *. This pride was no leſs intractable, no leſs averſe to the inſtructions of *Chriſt*, or of his Apoſtles, than that of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*. St. *Paul* was therefore to contend in his enterprize of converting the *Gentiles*, with all the oppoſition that could be made to it by all the different ſects of philoſophers. And how formidable an oppoſition this was, let thoſe conſider who are acquainted from hiſtory with the great credit thoſe ſects had obtained at that time in the world; a credit even ſuperior to that of the prieſts. Whoever pretended to learning or virtue was their Diſciple: the greateſt magiſtrates, generals, kings, ranged themſelves under their diſcipline, were trained up in their ſchools, and profeſſed the opinions they taught.

All theſe ſects made it a maxim, not to

* Rom. i. 22.

diſturb

diſturb the popular worſhip, or eſtabliſhed religion; but under thoſe limitations they taught very freely whatever they pleaſed, and no religious opinions were more warmly ſupported, than thoſe they delivered were by their followers. The Chriſtian religion at once overturned their ſeveral ſyſtems, taught a morality more perfect than theirs, and eſtabliſhed it upon higher and much ſtronger foundations, mortified their pride, confounded their learning, diſcovered their ignorance, ruined their credit. Againſt ſuch an enemy what would they not do? Would they not exert the whole power of their rhetorick, the whole art of their logick, their influence over the people, their intereſt with the great, to diſcredit a novelty ſo alarming to them all? If St. *Paul* had nothing to truſt to but his own natural faculties, his own underſtanding, knowledge, and eloquence, could he have hoped to be ſingly a match for all theirs united againſt him? Could a teacher, unheard of before, from an obſcure and unlearned part of the world, have withſtood the authority of *Plato*, *Ariſtotle*, *Epicurus*, *Zeno*, *Arceſilaus*, *Carneades*, and all the great names which held the firſt rank of human wiſdom?

He

He might as well have attempted alone, or with the help of *Barnabas* and *Silas*, of *Timotheus* and *Titus*, to have erected a monarchy upon the ruins of all the ſeveral ſtates then in the world, as to have erected Chriſtianity upon the deſtruction of all the ſeveral ſects of philoſophy which reigned in the minds of the *Gentiles*, among whom he preached, particularly the *Greeks* and the *Romans*.

Having thus proved (as I think) that in the work of converting the *Gentiles*, St. *Paul* could have no aſſiſtance, but was ſure on the contrary of the utmoſt repugnance and oppoſition to it imaginable, from the magiſtrates, from the prieſts, from the people, and from the philoſophers; it neceſſarily follows, that to ſucceed in that work he muſt have called in ſome extraordinary aid, ſome ſtronger power than that of reaſon and argument. Accordingly we find, he tells the *Corinthians*, *that his ſpeech and preaching was not with enticing words of man's wiſdom, but in demonſtration of the ſpirit and of power.* 1 Cor. ii. 4. And to the *Theſſalonians*, he ſays, *Our Goſpel came not unto you in word only, but alſo in power and in the Holy Ghoſt.* 1 Theſſ. i. 5. It was to the efficacy of the Divine power that he aſcribed

aſcribed all his ſucceſs in thoſe countries, and wherever elſe he planted the Goſpel of *Chriſt*. If that power really went with him, it would enable him to overcome all thoſe difficulties that obſtructed his enterprize, but *then he was not an impoſtor:* our inquiry therefore muſt be, whether (ſuppoſing him to have been an impoſtor) he could by *pretending to miracles*, have overcome all thoſe difficulties, and carried on his work with ſucceſs.

Now to give miracles, falſely pretended to, any reputation, two circumſtances are principally neceſſary, *an apt diſpoſition* in thoſe whom they deſigned to impoſe upon, and a *powerful confederacy* to carry on, and abet the cheat. Both theſe circumſtances, or at leaſt one of them, have always accompanied all the falſe miracles, ancient and modern, which have obtained any credit among mankind. To both theſe was owing the general faith of the heathen world in oracles, auſpices, auguries, and other impoſtures, by which the prieſts, combined with the magiſtrates, ſupported the national worſhip and deluded a people prepoſſeſſed in their favour, and willing to be deceived. Both the ſame

cauſes likewiſe co-operate in the belief that is given to Popiſh miracles among thoſe of their own church. But neither of theſe aſſiſted St. *Paul*. What prepoſſeſſions could there have been in the minds of the *Gentiles*, either in favour of him, or the doctrines he taught? or rather, what prepoſſeſſions could be ſtronger than thoſe, which they undoubtedly had againſt both? If he had remained in *Judea*, it might have been ſuggeſted by unbelievers, that the *Jews* were *a credulous people*, apt *to ſeek after miracles*, and to afford them an eaſy belief; and that the fame of thoſe ſaid to be done by *Jeſus* himſelf, and by his Apoſtles, before *Paul* declared his converſion, had prediſpoſed their minds, and warmed their imaginations to the admiſſion of others ſuppoſed to be wrought by the ſame power.

The ſignal miracle of the Apoſtles ſpeaking with tongues on the day of *Pentecoſt* *, had made three thouſand converts; that of healing the lame man at the gate of the temple, five thouſand more. Nay ſuch was the faith of the multitude, that they brought forth

* Acts ii. 14. iv. 4.

the

the ſick into the ſtreets, and laid them on beds and couches, *that at the leaſt the ſhadow of* Peter *paſſing by might overſhadow ſome of them.* Acts v. 15. Here was therefore a good foundation laid for *Paul* to proceed upon in pretending to ſimilar miraculous works; though the prieſts, and the rulers were hardened againſt them, the people were inclined to give credit to them, and there was reaſon to hope for ſucceſs among *them* both at *Jeruſalem* and in all the regions belonging to the *Jews*. But no ſuch diſpoſitions were to be found in the *Gentiles*. There was among them no matter prepared for impoſture to work upon, no knowledge of *Chriſt*, no thought of his power, or of the power of thoſe who came in his name. Thus when, at *Luſtra* *, St. *Paul* healed the man who was a cripple from his birth, ſo far were the people there from ſuppoſing that he could be able to do ſuch a thing *as an Apoſtle of Chriſt*, or by any virtue derived from *him*, that they took *Paul* and *Barnabas* to be *gods* of their own, come down *in the*

* Acts xiv.

likeneſs

likeneſs of men, and would have *ſacrificed* to them *as ſuch*.

Now I aſk, Did the citizens of *Lyſtra* concur in this matter to the deceiving themſelves? Were their imaginations overheated with any conceits of a miraculous power belonging to *Paul*, which could diſpoſe them to think he worked ſuch a miracle when he did not? As the contrary is evident, ſo in all other places to which he carried the Goſpel, it may be proved to demonſtration, that he could find no diſpoſition, no aptneſs, no bias to aid his impoſture, if the miracles, by which he every where confirmed his preaching, had not been true.

On the other hand let us examine, whether without the advantage of ſuch an aſſiſtance there was any *confederacy* ſtrong enough to impoſe his falſe miracles upon the *Gentiles*, who were both unprepared and undiſpoſed to receive them. The contrary is apparent. He was in no combination with their *prieſts* or their *magiſtrates*; no *ſect* or *party* among them gave him any help; all eyes were open and watchful to detect his impoſtures, all hands ready to puniſh him as ſoon as detected. Had he remained in *Judea*, he would at leaſt have

have had many confederates, all the Apoſtles, all the Diſciples of *Chriſt*, at that time pretty numerous; but in preaching to the *Gentiles* he was often alone, never with more than two or three companions or followers. Was this a confederacy powerful enough to carry on ſuch a cheat, in ſo many different parts of the world, againſt the united oppoſition of the magiſtrates, prieſts, philoſophers, people, all combined to detect and expoſe their frauds?

Let it be alſo conſidered, that thoſe upon whom they practiſed theſe arts were not a groſs or ignorant people, apt to miſtake any uncommon operations of nature, or juggling tricks, for miraculous acts. The churches planted by St. *Paul* were in the moſt enlightened parts of the world, among the *Greeks* of *Aſia* and *Europe*, among the *Romans*, in the midſt of ſcience, philoſophy, freedom of thought, and in an age more inquiſitively curious into the powers of nature, and leſs inclined to credit religious frauds, than any before it. Nor were they only the loweſt of the people that he converted. *Sergius Paulus*, the proconſul of *Paphos*, *Eraſtus**, *Chamber-*

* ειϰονό, μος τῆς πόλεως, treaſurer or bailiff of the city.

lain

lain of *Corinth*, and *Dionyſius* the *Areopagite*, were his proſelytes.

Upon the whole it appears beyond contradiction, that his pretenſion to miracles was not aſſiſted by the *diſpoſition* of thoſe whom he deſigned to convert by thoſe means, nor by any powerful *confederacy* to carry on, and abet the cheat, without both which concurring circumſtances, or one at leaſt, no ſuch pretenſion was ever ſupported with any ſucceſs.

Both theſe circumſtances concurred even in the late famous miracles ſuppoſed to be done at *Abbé Paris*'s tomb. They had not indeed the ſupport of the government, and for that reaſon appear to deſerve more attention than other popiſh miracles; but they were ſupported by all the *Janſeniſts*, a very powerful and numerous party in *France*, made up partly of wiſe and able men, partly of bigots and enthuſiaſts. All theſe confederated together to give credit to miracles, ſaid to be wrought in behalf of their party, and thoſe who believed them were ſtrongly diſpoſed to that belief. And yet with theſe advantages how eaſily were they ſuppreſſed! Only by walling up that part of the church, where the tomb of the Saint, who was ſuppoſed to work them,

them, was placed! Soon after this was done, a paper was fixed on the wall with this inſcription:

De par le roy defenſe à Dieu
De faire miracle en ce lieu.

By command of the king, God is forbidden to work any more miracles here. The paſquinade was a witty one, but the event turned the point of it againſt the party by which it was made: for if God had really worked any miracles there, could this abſurd prohibition have taken effect? Would he have ſuffered his purpoſe to be defeated by building a wall? When all the Apoſtles were ſhut up in priſon to hinder their working of miracles *, the angel of the Lord opened the priſon doors, and let them out. But the power of *Abbé Paris* could neither throw down the wall that excluded his votaries, nor operate through that impediment. And yet his miracles are often compared with, and oppoſed by unbelievers to thoſe of *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, which is the reaſon of my having

* Acts v. 16. & ſequentes, to the 26th.

taken

taken this particular notice of them here. But to go back to the times nearer to St. *Paul*'s. There is in *Lucian* an account of a very extraordinary and ſucceſsful impoſture carried on in his days, by one *Alexander* * of Pontus, who introduced a new god into that country whoſe prophet he called himſelf, and in whoſe name he pretended to miracles, and delivered oracles, by which he acquired great wealth and power. All the arts by which this cheat was managed are laid open by *Lucian*, and nothing can better point out the difference between impoſture and truth, than to obſerve the different conduct of this man and St. *Paul*. *Alexander* made no alteration in the religion eſtabliſhed in *Pontus* before; he only grafted his own upon it: and ſpared no points to intereſt in the ſucceſs of it the whole *heathen* prieſthood, not only in *Pontus*, but all over the world †; ſending great numbers of thoſe who came to conſult him to other oracles, that were at that time in the higheſt vogue; by which means he engaged them all to ſupport the reputation of

* Vide the Pſeudomantis of *Lucian*.

† Pſeudom. *Lucian*. Varior, p. 765, 766.

his,

his, and abet his impoſture *. He ſpoke with the greateſt reſpect of all the ſects of philoſophers, except the *Epicureans*, who from their principles he was ſure would deride and oppoſe his fraud; for though they preſumed not to innovate and overturn eſtabliſhed religions, yet they very freely attacked and expoſed all innovations that were introduced under the name of religion, and had not the authority of a legal eſtabliſhment. To get the better of their oppoſition, as well as that of the Chriſtians †, he called in the aid of perſecution and force ‡, exciting the people againſt them, and anſwering objections with ſtones. That he might be ſure to get money enough, he delivered this oracle in the name of his God §, *I command you to grace with gifts my prophet and miniſter; for I have no regard for riches myſelf, but the greateſt for my prophet.* And he ſhared the gains that he made, which were immenſe, among an infinite number of aſſociates and

* Ibid. 763. † Ibid. 762, 763, 773, 777.
‡ Ibid. 762, 768, 773, 774.
§ Muneribus decorate meum vatem atque miniſtrum præcipio—nec opum mihi cura, at maxima vatis.

inſtruments,

inſtruments, whom he employed in carrying on and ſupporting his fraud. When any declared themſelves to be his enemies, againſt whom he durſt not proceed by open force, he endeavoured to gain them by blandiſhments, and having got them into his power, to deſtroy them by ſecret ways *; which arts he practiſed againſt *Lucian* himſelf. Others he kept in awe and dependence upon him, by detaining in his own hands the written queſtions they had propoſed to his God upon ſtate affairs; and as theſe generally came from men of the greateſt power and rank, his being poſſeſſed of them was of infinite ſervice to him, and made him maſter of all their credit †, and of no little part of their wealth.

He obtained the protection and friendſhip of *Rutilianus* ‡, a great *Roman* general, by flattering him with promiſes of a very long life, and exaltation to *Deity* after his death; and at laſt having quite turned his head, enjoined him by an oracle to marry his daughter, whom he pretended to have had by the

* Ibid. 776, 780, 781. † Ibid. 767.
‡ Ibid. 768.

moon;

moon; which command *Rutilianus* obeyed *, and by his alliance ſecured this impoſtor from any danger of puniſhment; the *Roman* governor of *Bythinia* and *Pontus* excuſing himſelf on that account from doing juſtice upon him, when *Lucian* † and ſeveral others offered themſelves to be his accuſers.

He never quitted that ignorant and barbarous country, which he had made choice of at firſt as the fitteſt to play his tricks in undiſcovered; but, reſiding himſelf among thoſe ſuperſtitious and credulous people, extended his fame to a great diſtance by the emiſſaries which he employed all over the world, eſpecially at *Rome* ‡, who did not pretend themſelves to work any miracles, but only promulgated his, and gave him intelligence of all that it was uſeful for him to know.

Theſe were the methods by which this remarkable fraud was conducted, every one of which is directly oppoſite to all thoſe uſed by St. *Paul* in preaching the Goſpel, and yet ſuch methods alone could give ſucceſs to a

* Ibid. 781. † Ibid. 753.
‡ Ibid. 762, 769.

cheat of this kind. I will not mention the many debaucheries, and wicked enormities committed by this falſe prophet under the maſk of religion, which is another characteriſtical difference between him and St. *Paul;* nor the ambiguous anſwers, cunning evaſions, and juggling artifices which he made uſe of; in all which it is eaſy to ſee the evident marks of an impoſture, as well as in the objects he plainly appears to have had in view. That which I chiefly inſiſt upon, is the ſtrong confederacy with which he took care to ſupport his pretenſion to miraculous powers, and the apt diſpoſition in thoſe he impoſed upon to concur and aſſiſt in deceiving themſelves; advantages entirely wanting to the Apoſtles of *Chriſt.*

From all this I think it may be concluded that no human means employed by St. *Paul,* in his deſign of converting the Gentiles, were or could be adequate to the great difficulties he had to contend with, or to the ſucceſs that we know attended his work; and we can in reaſon aſcribe that ſucceſs to no other cauſe, but the power of God going along with and aiding his miniſtry, becauſe no other was equal to the effect.

Having

Having then ſhewn that St. *Paul* had *no rational motives* to become an Apoſtle of *Chriſt*, without being himſelf convinced of the truth of that Goſpel he preached; and that, had he engaged in ſuch an impoſture without any rational motives, he would have had *no poſſible means* to carry it on with any *ſucceſs;* having alſo brought reaſons of a very ſtrong nature, to make it appear, that the ſucceſs he undoubtedly had in preaching the Goſpel was an effect of the Divine power attending his miniſtry, I might reſt all my proof of the Chriſtian religion being a Divine Revelation, upon the arguments drawn from this head alone. But, to conſider this ſubject in all poſſible lights, I ſhall purſue the propoſition which I ſet out with through each of its ſeveral parts; and having proved, as I hope, to the conviction of any impartial man, that St. *Paul* was not an impoſtor, who ſaid what he knew to be falſe with an intent to deceive; I come next to conſider whether he was an *enthuſiaſt*, who by the force of an overheated imagination impoſed upon himſelf.

Now theſe are the ingredients of which *enthuſiaſm* is generally compoſed: great heat

of temper, melancholy, ignorance, credulity, and vanity or ſelf-conceit. That the firſt of theſe qualities was in St. *Paul*, may be concluded from that fervour of zeal with which he acted both as a *Jew* and *Chriſtian*, in maintaining that which he thought to be right; and hence, I ſuppoſe, as well as from the impoſſibility of his having been an impoſtor, ſome unbelievers have choſe to conſider him as an enthuſiaſt. But this quality alone will not be ſufficient to prove him to have been ſo, in the opinion of any reaſonable man. The ſame temper has been common to others, who undoubtedly were not enthuſiaſts, to the *Gracchi*, to *Cato*, to *Brutus*, to many more among the beſt and wiſeſt of men. Nor does it appear that this diſpoſition had ſuch a maſtery over the mind of St. *Paul*, that he was not able at all times to rule and controul it by the dictates of reaſon. On the contrary, he was ſo much the maſter of it, as, in matters of an indifferent nature, to *become all things to all men* *, bending his notions and manners to theirs, ſo far as his duty to God would permit, with the moſt

* 1 Cor. ix. 20, 21, 22.

pliant

pliant condeſcenſion; a conduct neither compatible with the ſtiffneſs of a bigot, nor the violent impulſes of fanatic deluſions. His zeal was eager and warm, but tempered with prudence, and even with the civilities and decorums of life, as appears by his behaviour to *Agrippa*, *Feſtus*, and *Felix*; not the blind, inconſiderate, indecent zeal of an enthuſiaſt.

Let us now ſee if any one of thoſe other qualities which I have laid down, as diſpoſing the mind to enthuſiaſm, and as being characteriſtical of it, belong to St. *Paul*. Firſt, as to melancholy, which of all diſpoſitions of body or mind is moſt prone to enthuſiaſm*, it neither appears by his writings, nor by any thing told of him in the Acts of the Apoſtles, nor by any other evidence, that St. *Paul* was inclined to it more than other men. Though he was full of remorſe for his former ignorant perſecution of the Church of Chriſt, we read of no gloomy penances, no extravagant mortifications, ſuch as the *Bramins*, the *Jaugues*, the monks of *La Trappe*, and other melancholy enthuſiaſts, inflict on themſelves. His

* Joſephus cont. Apion, l. ii. c. 37.

holineſs only conſiſted in the ſimplicity of a good life, and the unwearied performance of thoſe apoſtolical duties to which he was called. The ſufferings he met with on that account he chearfully bore, and even rejoiced in them for the love of *Jeſus Chriſt*, but he brought none on himſelf; we find, on the contrary, that he pleaded the privilege of a *Roman* Citizen to avoid being whipped. I could mention more inſtances of his having uſed the beſt methods that prudence could ſuggeſt, to eſcape danger and ſhun perſecution, whenever it could be done without betraying the duty of his office, or the honour of God *

Compare

* A remarkable inſtance of this appears in his conduct among the *Athenians* *. There was at *Athens* a law, which made it capital to introduce or teach any new gods in their ſtate. Therefore when *Paul* was preaching *Jeſus and the reſurrection* to the *Athenians*, ſome of them carried him before the court of *Areopagus*, the ordinary judges of criminal matters, and in a particular manner entruſted with the care of religion, as having broken this law, and being *a ſetter forth of ſtrange gods*. Now in this caſe an impoſtor would have

* Acts xvii. and Joſephus cont. Apion, l. ii. c. 37.

retracted

Compare with this the conduct of *Francis* of *Aſſiſi*, or *Ignatius Loyola*, and other enthuſiaſts ſainted by *Rome*, it will be found the reverſe of St. *Paul*'s. '*He wiſhed indeed to die, and be with Chriſt,*' but ſuch a wiſh is no proof of melancholy, or enthuſiaſm; it only proves his conviction of the Divine truths he preached, and of the happineſs laid up for him in thoſe bleſſed abodes which had been ſhewn to him even in this life. Upon the whole, neither in his actions, nor in the inſtructions he gave to thoſe under his charge, is there any tincture of melancholy, which

retracted his doctrine to ſave his life, and an enthuſiaſt would have loſt his life without trying to ſave it by innocent means. St. *Paul* did neither the one nor the other; he availed himſelf of an altar which he had found in the city, inſcribed *To the Unknown God*, and pleaded that he did not propoſe to them the worſhip of any new god, but only explained to them one whom their government had already received; *Whom therefore ye ignorantly worſhip, him declare I unto you.* By this he avoided the law, and eſcaped being condemned by the *Areopagus*, without departing in the leaſt from the truth of the Goſpel, or violating the honour of God. An admirable proof, in my opinion, of the good ſenſe with which he acted, and one that ſhews there was no mixture of fanaticiſm in his religion.

yet is ſo eſſential a characteriſtick of enthuſiaſm, that I have ſcarce ever heard of any enthuſiaſt, ancient or modern, in whom ſome very evident marks of it did not appear.

As to ignorance, which is another ground of enthuſiaſm, St. *Paul* was ſo far from it, that he appears to have been maſter not of the *Jewiſh* learning alone, but of the *Greek*. And this is one reaſon why he is leſs liable to the imputation of having been an enthuſiaſt than the other Apoſtles, though none of them were ſuch any more than he, as may by other arguments be invincibly proved.

I have mentioned credulity as another characteriſtick and cauſe of enthuſiaſm, which, that it was not in St. *Paul*, the hiſtory of his life undeniably ſhews. For, on the contrary, he ſeems to have been ſlow and hard of belief in the extremeſt degree, having paid no regard to all the miracles done by our Saviour, the fame of which he could not be a ſtranger to, as he lived in *Jeruſalem*, nor to that ſignal one done after his reſurrection, and in his name *, by *Peter* and *John*, upon

* Acts iii.

the

the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple; nor to the evidence given in conſequence of it by *Peter*, in preſence of the high-prieſt *, the rulers, elders, and ſcribes, that *Chriſt was raiſed from the dead.* He muſt alſo have known, that when *all the Apoſtles* had been *ſhut up in the common priſon, and the high-prieſt, the council, and all the ſenate of the children of* Iſrael *had ſent their officers to bring them before them, the officers came and found them not in priſon*, but *returned* and made this report: '*The priſon truly found we* '*ſhut with all ſafety*, and the *keepers ſtanding* '*without before the doors, but when we had* '*opened we found no man within.*' And that the council was immediately told, *that the men they had put in priſon were ſtanding in the temple, and teaching the people.* And that *being brought* from thence *before the council*, they had ſpoke theſe memorable words, *We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raiſed up* Jeſus, *whom ye ſlew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to* Iſrael, *and for-*

* Acts v. 18, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32.

giveneſs of ſins. And we are his witneſſes of theſe things, and ſo is alſo the Holy Ghoſt, whom God has given to them that obey him *. All this he reſiſted, and was conſenting to the murder of *Stephen*, who preached the ſame thing, and evidenced it by miracles. So that his mind, far from being diſpoſed to a credulous faith, or a too eaſy reception of any miracle worked in proof of the Chriſtian religion, appears to have been barred againſt it by the moſt obſtinate prejudices, as much as any man's could poſſibly be; and from hence the may fairly conclude, that nothing leſs than the irreſiſtible evidence of *his own ſenſes*, clear from all poſſibility of doubt, could have overcome his unbelief.

Vanity or ſelf-conceit is another circumſtance that for the moſt part prevails in the character of an enthuſiaſt. It leads men of a warm temper and religious turn, to think themſelves worthy of the ſpecial regard, and extraordinary favours of God, and the breath of that inſpiration to which they pretend, is often no more than the wind of this vanity, which puffs them up to ſuch extravagant

* Acts vii. 1.

imagi-

imaginations. This ſtrongly appears in the writings and lives of ſome enthuſiaſtical hereticks, in the myſticks both ancient and modern, in many founders of orders and ſaints. both male and female amongſt the Papiſts, in ſeveral Proteſtant ſectaries of the laſt age, and even in ſome of the *Methodiſts* now*. All the Divine communications, illuminations, and extaſies, to which they have pretended, evidently ſprung from much ſelf-conceit, working together with the vapours of melancholy upon a warm imagination; and this is one reaſon, beſides the contagious nature of melancholy, or fear, that makes enthuſiaſm ſo very catching among weak minds. Such are moſt ſtrongly diſpoſed to vanity; and, when they ſee others pretend to extraordinary gifts, are apt to flatter themſelves that they may partake of them as well as thoſe whoſe merit they think no more than their own. Vanity therefore may juſtly be deemed

* See the account of *Montanus* and his followers, the writings of the counterfeit *Dionyſius* the *Areopagite*, *Santa Thereſa*, St. *Catherine* of *Sienna*, Madame *Bourignon*, the lives of St. *Francis* of *Aſſiſi*, and *Ignatius Loyola*; ſee alſo an account of the lives of *George Fox*, and of *Rice Evans*, and *Whiteſield*'s Journal.

a principal ſource of enthuſiaſm. But that St. *Paul* was as free from it as any man, I think may be gathered from all that we ſee in his writings, or know of his life. Throughout his Epiſtles there is not one word that favours of vanity, nor is any action recorded of him, in which the leaſt mark of it appears.

In his Epiſtle to the *Epheſians* he calls himſelf *leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints* *. And to the *Corinthians*, he ſays, *he is the leaſt of the Apoſtles, and not meet to be called an Apoſtle, becauſe he had perſecuted the church of God* †. In his Epiſtle to *Timothy* he ſays, 'This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all 'acceptation, That *Chriſt Jeſus* came into 'the world to ſave ſinners, *of whom I am 'chief.* Howbeit for this cauſe I obtained 'mercy, that in me firſt *Jeſus Chriſt* might 'ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern 'to them which ſhould hereafter believe in 'him to life everlaſting ‡.'

It is true indeed, that in another epiſtle he tells the *Corinthians, That he was not a whit*

* Eph. iii. 8. † 1 Cor. xv. 9. ‡ 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.

behind

behind the very chiefeſt of the Apoſtles, 2 Cor. xi. 5. But the occaſion which drew from him theſe words muſt be conſidered. A falſe teacher by faction and calumny had brought his apoſtleſhip to be in queſtion among the *Corinthians*. Againſt ſuch an attack not to have aſſerted his apoſtolical dignity, would have been a betraying of the office and duty committed to him by God. He was therefore conſtrained to do himſelf juſtice, and not let down that character, upon the authority of which the whole ſucceſs and efficacy of his miniſtry among them depended. But how did he do it? Not with that wantonneſs which a vain man indulges, when he can get any opportunity of commending himſelf; not with a pompous detail of all the amazing miracles which he had performed in different parts of the world, though he had ſo fair an occaſion of doing it, but with a modeſt and ſimple expoſition of his abundant labours and ſufferings in preaching the Goſpel, and barely reminding them, 'that the 'ſigns of an apoſtle had been wrought *among* 'them, in all patience, in ſigns and wonders, 'and mighty deeds*.' Could he ſay leſs

* 2 Cor. xii. 12.

than,

than this? Is not ſuch boaſting *humility itſelf?* And yet for this he makes many apologies, expreſſing the greateſt uneaſineſs in being obliged to ſpeak thus of himſelf, even in his own vindication *. When, in the ſame epiſtle, and for the ſame purpoſe, he mentions the viſion he had of heaven, how modeſtly does he do it! Not in his own name, but in the third perſon, *I knew a man in Chriſt*, &c. *caught up into the third heaven* †. And immediately after, he adds, *but now I forbear, leſt any man ſhould think of me above that which he ſeeth me to be, or that he heareth of me* ‡. How contrary is this to a ſpirit of vanity! how different from the practice of enthuſiaſtick pretenders to raptures and viſions, who never think they can dwell long enough upon thoſe ſubjects, but fill whole volumes with their accounts of them! Yet St. *Paul* is not ſatisfied with this forbearance; he adds the confeſſion of ſome *infirmity*, which he tells the *Corinthians* was given to him as an alloy, *that he might not be above meaſure exalted through the abundance of his*

* 2 Cor. xi. 1, 16, 17, 18, 19, 30. † 2 Cor. xii. 2. ‡ 2 Cor. xii. 6.

revelations.

revelations *. I would alſo obſerve, that he ſays this rapture or viſion of paradiſe happened to him above fourteen years before. Now had it been the effect of a mere enthuſiaſtical fancy, can it be ſuppoſed that in ſo long a period of time, he would not have had many more raptures of the ſame kind? Would not his imagination have been perpetually carrying him to heaven, as we find St. *Thereſa*, St. *Bridget*, and St. *Catherine* † were carried by theirs? And if vanity had been predominant in him, would he have remained fourteen years in abſolute ſilence upon ſo great a mark of the Divine favour? No, we ſhould certainly have ſeen his epiſtles filled with nothing elſe but long accounts of theſe viſions, conferences with angels, with *Chriſt*, with God Almighty, myſtical unions with God, and all that we read in the works of thoſe fainted enthuſiaſts, whom I have mentioned before. But he only mentions this viſion in anſwer to the falſe teacher who had diſputed his Apoſtolical power, and comprehends it all in three ſentences, with many ex-

* 2 Cor. xii. 7.

† See their works and lives.

cuſes

cuſes for being compelled to make any mention of it at all *. Nor does he take any merit to himſelf, even from the ſucceſs of thoſe Apoſtolical labours which he principally boaſts of in his epiſtle. For in a former one to the ſame church he writes thus, 'Who 'then is *Paul*, and who is *Apollos*, but mini-'ſters by whom ye believed, even as the 'Lord gave to every man? I have planted, '*Apollos* watered, but God gave the increaſe. 'So then neither is he that planteth *any* '*thing*, neither he that watereth, but God 'that giveth the increaſe.' And in another place of the ſame Epiſtle he ſays, 'By the 'grace of God I am what I am, and his grace 'which was beſtowed upon me was not in 'vain; but I laboured more abundantly than 'they all: *yet not I, but the grace of God* '*which was with me* †.'

I think it needleſs to give more inſtances of the modeſty of St. *Paul*. Certain I am, not one can be given that bears any colour of vanity, or that vanity in particular, which ſo ſtrongly appears in all enthuſiaſts, of ſetting

* 2 Cor. xii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11.

† 1 Cor. xv. 10.

their

their imaginary gifts above thoſe virtues which make the eſſence of true religion, and the real excellency of a good man, or, in the ſcripture phraſe, of a *ſaint*. In his firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians* he has theſe words, 'Though I ſpeak with the tongues of men 'and of angels, and have not charity, I am 'become as ſounding braſs or a tinkling 'cymbal. And though I have the gift of 'prophecy, and underſtand all myſteries and 'all knowledge, and though I have all faith 'ſo that I could remove mountains, and 'have no charity, I am nothing. And 'though I beſtow all my goods to feed the 'poor, and though I give my body to be 'burned, and have not charity, it profiteth 'me nothing *.' Is this the language of enthuſiaſm? Did ever enthuſiaſt prefer that univerſal benevolence which comprehends all moral virtues, and which (as appears by the following verſes) is meant by charity here; did ever enthuſiaſt, I ſay, prefer that benevolence to *faith*, and to miracles, to thoſe religious opinions which he had embraced, and to thoſe ſupernatural graces and gifts

* 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3, 4.

which

which he imagined he had acquired, nay even to the merit of martyrdom? Is it not the genius of enthuſiaſm to ſet moral virtues infinitely below the merit of faith, and of all moral virtues to value that leaſt which is moſt particularly enforced by St. *Paul*, a ſpirit of candour, moderation and peace? Certainly neither the temper, nor the opinions of a man ſubject to fanatick deluſions, are to be found in this paſſage; but it may be juſtly concluded, that he who could eſteem the value of charity ſo much above miraculous gifts, could not have pretended to any ſuch gifts if he had them not in reality.

Since then it is manifeſt from the foregoing examination, that in St. *Paul*'s diſpoſition and character thoſe qualities do not occur which ſeem neceſſary to form an enthuſiaſt, it muſt be reaſonable to conclude he was none. But allowing, for argument's ſake, that all thoſe qualities were to be found in him, or that the heat of his temper alone could be a ſufficient foundation to ſupport ſuch a ſuſpicion; I ſhall endeavour to prove, that he could not have impoſed on himſelf by any power of enthuſiaſm, either in regard to the miracle that cauſed his converſion, or to the

the conſequent effects of it, or to ſome other circumſtances which he bears teſtimony to in his Epiſtles.

The power of imagination in enthuſiaſtical minds is no doubt very ſtrong, but it always acts in conformity to the opinions imprinted upon it at the time of its working, and can no more act againſt them, than a rapid river can carry a boat againſt the current of its own ſtream. Now nothing can be more certain, than that when *Saul* ſet out for *Damaſcus* with an authority from the chief prieſts *to bring the Chriſtians which were there, bound to Jeruſalem* *, an authority ſolicited by himſelf, and granted to him at his own earneſt deſire, his mind was ſtrongly poſſeſſed with opinions againſt *Chriſt* and his followers. To give thoſe opinions a more active force, his paſſions at that time concurred, being inflamed in the higheſt degree by the irritating conſciouſneſs of his vaſt conduct towards them, the pride of ſupporting a part he had voluntarily engaged in, and the credit he found it procured him among the chief prieſts and rulers, whoſe commiſſion he bore.

* Acts ix. 2.

If,

If, in ſuch a ſtate and temper of mind, an enthuſiaſtical man had imagined he ſaw a viſion from heaven denouncing the anger of God againſt the Chriſtians, and commanding him to perſecute them without any mercy, it might be accounted for by the natural power of enthuſiaſm. But that in the very inſtant of his being engaged in the fierceſt and hotteſt perſecution againſt them, no circumſtance having happened to change his opinions, or alter the bent of his diſpoſition, he ſhould at once imagine himſelf called by a heavenly viſion to be the Apoſtle of *Chriſt*, whom but a moment before he deemed an impoſtor and a blaſphemer, that had been juſtly put to death on the croſs, is in itſelf wholly incredible, and ſo far from being a probable effect of enthuſiaſm, that juſt a contrary effect muſt have been naturally produced by that cauſe. The warmth of his temper carried him violently another way; and whatever deluſions his imagination could raiſe to impoſe on his reaſon, muſt have been raiſed at that time agreeably to the notions imprinted upon it, and by which it was heated to a degree of enthuſiaſm, not in direct

contra-

contradiction to all thoſe notions, while they remained in their full force.

This is ſo clear a propoſition, that I might reſt the whole argument entirely upon it: But, ſtill farther to ſhew that this viſion could not be a phantom of St. *Paul*'s own creating, I beg leave to obſerve, that he was not alone when he ſaw it; there were many others in company, whoſe minds were no better diſpoſed than his to the Chriſtian faith. Could it be poſſible that the imaginations of all theſe men ſhould at the ſame time be ſo ſtrangely affected, as to make them believe that they ſaw a *great light ſhining about them, above the brightneſs of the ſun at noon-day*, and heard the ſound of *a voice from heaven* *, though *not the words which it ſpake*, when in reality they never ſaw, nor heard any ſuch thing? Could they be ſo infatuated with the conceit of their fancy, as to *fall down from their horſes*, together with *Saul*, and be *ſpeechleſs through fear* †, when nothing had happened extraordinary either to them or to him; eſpecially conſidering that this appari-

* Acts ix. 3. xxii. 9. † Acts xxvi. 14. ix. 7.

tion

tion did not happen in the night when the ſenſes are more eaſily impoſed upon, but at mid-day? If a ſudden frenzy had ſeized upon *Saul*, from any diſtemper of body or mind, can we ſuppoſe his whole company, men of different conſtitutions and underſtandings, to have been at once affected in the ſame manner with him, ſo that not the diſtemper alone, but the effects of it, ſhould exactly agree? If all had gone mad together, would not the frenzy of ſome have taken a different turn, and preſented to them different objects? This ſuppoſition is ſo contrary to nature and all poſſibility, that unbelief muſt find ſome other ſolution, or give up the point.

I ſhall ſuppoſe then, in order to try to account for the viſion without a miracle, that as *Saul* and his company were journeying along in their way to *Damaſcus*, an extraordinary meteor did really happen, which caſt a great light, as ſome meteors will do; at which, they being affrighted, fell to the ground in the manner related. This might be poſſible; and fear, grounded on ignorance of ſuch phænomena, might make them imagine it to be a viſion from God. Nay even the

the voice or ſound they heard in the air, might be an exploſion attending this meteor, or at leaſt there are thoſe who would rather recur to ſuch a ſuppoſition as this, however incredible, than acknowledge the miracle. But how will this account for the diſtinct words heard by St. *Paul*, to which he made anſwer? How will it account for what followed upon it when he came to *Damaſcus*, agreeably to the ſenſe of thoſe words which he heard? How came *Ananias* to go to him there, and ſay, 'He was choſen by God to 'know his will, and ſee that Juſt One, and 'hear the voice of his mouth *?' Or why did he propoſe to him *to be baptized* †? What connection was there between the meteor which *Saul* had ſeen, and theſe words of *Ananias?* Will it be ſaid that *Ananias* was ſkilful enough to take advantage of the fright he was in at that appearance, in order to make him a Chriſtian: But could *Ananias* inſpire him with a viſion in which he ſaw him before he came ‡? If that viſion was the effect of imagination, how was it

* Acts xxii. 14. † Acts xxii. 16.
‡ Acts ix.

verified

verified ſo exactly in fact? But allowing that he dreamt by chance of *Ananias*'s coming, and that *Ananias* came by chance too, or, if you pleaſe, that having heard of his dream, he came to take advantage of that, as well as of the meteor which *Saul* had ſeen, will this get over the difficulty? No, there was more to be done. *Saul* was ſtruck blind, and had been ſo for three days. Now had this blindneſs been natural from the effects of a meteor or lightning upon him, it would not have been poſſible for *Ananias* to heal it, as we find that he did, merely by putting his hands on him and ſpeaking a few words. This undoubtedly ſurpaſſed the power of nature; and if this was a miracle, it proves the other to have been a miracle too, and a miracle done by the ſame *Jeſus Chriſt*. For *Ananias*, when he healed *Saul*, ſpoke to him thus; *Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jeſus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou cameſt, has ſent me, that thou mighteſt receive thy ſight, and be filled with the Holy Ghoſt**. And that he ſaw *Chriſt* both now and after this time†, appears not only by what he relates, Acts

* Acts ix. 17, 18. xxii. 13. † Acts ix. 17. xxii.

xxii. 17, 18, but by other paſſages in his epiſtles, 1 *Cor.* ix. 1. xvi. 8. From *him* (as he aſſerts in many places of his epiſtles) he learned the Goſpel by immediate Revelation, and by him he was ſent to the Gentiles, *Acts* xxii. 31. xxiii. 11. Among thoſe Gentiles *from Jeruſalem, and round about Illyricum*, he preached the Goſpel of *Chriſt with mighty ſigns and wonders wrought by the power of the Spirit of God, to make them obedient to his preaching* *, as he teſtifies himſelf in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, and of which a particular account is given to us in the Acts of the Apoſtles; ſigns and wonders indeed, above any power of nature to work, or of impoſture to counterfeit, or of enthuſiaſm to imagine. Now does not ſuch a ſeries of miraculous acts, all conſequential to and dependent upon the firſt Revelation, put the truth of that Revelation beyond all poſſibility of doubt or deceit? And if he could ſo have impoſed on himſelf as to think that he worked them when he did not (which ſuppoſition cannot be admitted, if he was not all that time quite out of his ſenſes), how could ſo *diſtempered an en-*

* Rom. xv. 19.

thuſiaſt make ſuch a progreſs, as we know that he did, in converting the Gentile world? If the difficulties which have been ſhewn to have obſtructed that work were ſuch as the ableſt impoſtor could not overcome, how much more inſurmountable were they to a madman?

It is a much harder taſk for unbelievers to account for the ſucceſs of St. *Paul*, in preaching the Goſpel, upon the ſuppoſition of his having been an enthuſiaſt, than of his having been an impoſtor. Neither of theſe ſuppoſitions can ever account for it; but the impoſſibility is more glaringly ſtrong in this caſe than the other. I could enter into a particular examination of all the miracles recorded in the Acts to have been done by St. *Paul*, and ſhew that they were not of a nature in which enthuſiaſm, either in him, or the perſons he worked them upon, or the ſpectators, could have any part. I will mention only a few. When he told *Elymas* the ſorcerer, at *Paphos*, before the *Roman* deputy, that *the hand of God was upon him, and he ſhould be blind, not ſeeing the ſun for a ſeaſon; and immediately there fell on him a miſt and a darkneſs, and he went about ſeeking ſome to lead*

*lead him by the hand**; had enthuſiaſm in the doer or ſufferer any ſhare in this act? If *Paul*, as an enthuſiaſt, had thrown out this menace, and the effect had not followed, inſtead of converting the deputy; as we are told that he did, he would have drawn on himſelf his rage and contempt. But the effect upon *Elymas* could not be cauſed by enthuſiaſm in *Paul*; much leſs can it be imputed to an enthuſiaſtick belief in that perſon himſelf, of his being ſtruck blind, when he was not, by thoſe words of a man whoſe preaching he ſtrenuouſly and bitterly oppoſed. Nor can we aſcribe the converſion of *Sergius*, which happened upon it, to any enthuſiaſm. A *Roman* proconſul was not very likely to be an enthuſiaſt; but had he been one, he muſt have been bigotted to his own gods, and ſo much the leſs inclined to believe any miraculous power in St. *Paul*. When at *Troas* †, a young man named *Eutychus fell down from a* high *window*, while *Paul* was preaching, *and was taken up dead*. Could any enthuſiaſm, either in *Paul* or the congregation there preſent, make them be-

* Acts xiii. † Acts xx. 9.

lieve, that by that Apoſtle's *falling upon him and embracing him*, he was reſtored to life? Or could he who was ſo reſtored contribute any thing to it himſelf, by any power of his own imagination? When, in the iſle of *Melita*, where St. *Paul* was ſhipwrecked, there *came a viper and faſtened on his hand*, which he *ſhook off, and felt no harm* *; was that an effect of enthuſiaſm? An enthuſiaſt might perhaps have been mad enough to hope for ſafety againſt the bite of a viper without any remedy being applied to it, but would that hope have prevented his death? Or were the barbarous iſlanders, to whom this Apoſtle was an abſolute ſtranger, prepared by enthuſiaſm to expect and believe that any miracle would be worked to preſerve him? On the contrary, when they ſaw the viper hang on his hand, they ſaid among themſelves, 'No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, 'though he hath eſcaped the ſea, yet vengeance ſuffereth not to live.' I will add no more inſtances: theſe are ſufficient to ſhew that the miracles told of St. *Paul*, can no

* Acts xxvii,

more

more be aſcribed to enthuſiaſm than to impoſture.

But moreover, the power of working miracles was not confined to St. *Paul;* it was alſo communicated to the churches he planted in different parts of the world. In many parts of his firſt Epiſtles he tells the *Corinthians**, that they had among them many miraculous graces and gifts, and gives them directions for the more orderly uſe of them in their aſſemblies. Now I aſk, whether all that he ſaid upon that head is to be aſcribed to enthuſiaſm? If the *Corinthians* knew that they had among them no ſuch miraculous powers, they muſt have regarded the author of that Epiſtle as a man out of his ſenſes, inſtead of revering him as an Apoſtle of God.

If, for inſtance, a Quaker ſhould, in a meeting of his own ſect, tell all the perſons aſſembled there, that *to ſome among them was given the gift of healing by the ſpirit of God, to others the working of other miracles, to others divers kinds of tongues* they would undoubtedly account him a madman, becauſe they

* 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5.

 pretend

pretend to no ſuch gifts. If indeed they were only told by him that they were inſpired by the Spirit of God in a certain ineffable manner, which they alone could underſtand, but which did not diſcover itſelf by any outward, diſtinct operations, or ſigns, they might miſtake the impulſe of enthuſiaſm for the inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt; but they could not believe, *againſt the conviction of their own minds*, that they ſpoke tongues they did not ſpeak, or healed diſtempers they did not heal, or worked other miracles, when they worked none. If it be ſaid, the *Corinthians*, might pretend to theſe powers, though the Quakers do not; I aſk, whether in that pretenſion they were impoſtors, or only enthuſiaſts? If they were impoſtors, and St. *Paul* was alſo ſuch, how ridiculous was it for him to adviſe them, in an Epiſtle writ *only to them, and for their own uſe, not* to value themſelves too highly upon thoſe gifts; to pray for one rather than another, and prefer charity to them all! Do aſſociates in fraud talk ſuch a language to one another? But if we ſuppoſe their pretenſion to all thoſe gifts was an effect of enthuſiaſm, let us conſider how it was poſſible that he and they could

could be ſo cheated by that enthuſiaſm, as to imagine they had ſuch powers when they had not.

Suppoſe that enthuſiaſm could make a man think, that he was able by a word or a touch to give ſight to the blind, motion to the lame, or life to the dead: would that conceit of his make the blind ſee, the lame walk, or the dead revive? And if it did not, how could he perſiſt in ſuch an opinion; or upon his perſiſting, eſcape being ſhut up for a madman? But ſuch a madneſs could not infect ſo many at once, as St. *Paul* ſuppoſes at *Corinth* to have been endowed with the gift of healing, or any other miraculous powers. One of the miracles which they pretended to was the ſpeaking of languages they never had learned. And St. *Paul* ſays, he poſſeſſed this gift *more than them all**. If this had been a deluſion of fancy, if they had ſpoke only gibberiſh, or unmeaning ſounds, it would ſoon have appeared when they came to make uſe of it where it was neceſſary, viz. in converting thoſe who underſtood not any language they naturally ſpoke.

* 1 Cor. xiv. 18.

St. *Paul* particularly, who travelled ſo far upon that deſign, and had ſuch occaſion to uſe it, muſt ſoon have diſcovered that this imaginary gift of the Spirit was no gift at all, but a ridiculous inſtance of *frenzy*, which had poſſeſſed both him and them. But if thoſe he ſpoke to in diverſe tongues underſtood what he ſaid, and were converted to *Chriſt* by that means, how could it be a deluſion? Of all the miracles recorded in Scripture, none are more clear from any poſſible imputation of being the effect of an enthuſiaſtick imagination than this. For how could any man think that he had it, who had it not? or if he did think ſo, not be undeceived when he came to put his gift to the proof? Accordingly, I do not find ſuch a power to have been ever pretended to by any enthuſiaſt, ancient or modern.

If then St. *Paul* and the church of *Corinth* were not deceived in aſcribing to themſelves this miraculous power, but really had it, there is the ſtrongeſt reaſon to think, that neither were they deceived in the other powers to which they pretended; as the ſame ſpirit which gave them that, equally could, and probably would, give them the others, to

ſerve

ſerve the ſame holy ends for which that was given. And, by conſequence, St. *Paul* was no enthuſiaſt in what he wrote upon that head to the *Corinthians*, nor in other ſimilar inſtances where he aſcribes to himſelf, or to the churches he founded, any ſupernatural graces and gifts. Indeed they who would impute to imagination effects ſuch as thoſe which St *Paul* imputes to the power of God attending his miſſion, muſt aſcribe to imagination the ſame omnipotence which he aſcribes to God.

Having thus, I flatter myſelf ſatisfactorily ſhewn that St. *Paul* could not be an enthuſiaſt, who by the force of an over-heated imagination impoſed on himſelf, I am next to enquire, whether he was deceived by the fraud of others, and whether all that he ſaid of himſelf can be imputed to the power of that deceit? But I need ſay little to ſhew the abſurdity of this ſuppoſition. It was morally impoſſible for the diſciples of *Chriſt*, to conceive ſuch a thought as that of turning his proſecutor into his Apoſtle, and to do this by a fraud, in the very inſtant of his greateſt fury againſt them and their Lord. But could they have been ſo extravagant as to conceive ſuch a thought, it was phyſically impoſſible for them to execute it in a manner we find

his converſion to have been effected. Could they produce a light in the air which at mid-day was brighter than that of the ſun? Could they make *Saul* hear words from out of that light which were not heard by the reſt of the company *? Could they make him blind for three days after that viſion, and then make ſcales fall off from his eyes, and reſtore him to his ſight by a word? Beyond diſpute, no fraud could do theſe things, but much leſs ſtill could the fraud of others produce thoſe miracles ſubſequent to his converſion, in which he was not paſſive, but active, which he did himſelf, and appeals to in his Epiſtles as proofs of his divine miſſion. I ſhall then take it for granted that he was not deceived by the fraud of others, and that what he ſaid of himſelf cannot be imputed to the power of that deceit, no more than to wilful impoſture, or to enthuſiaſm; and then it follows, that what he related to have been the cauſe of his converſion, and to have happened in conſequence of it, did all really happen, and *therefore the Chriſtian religion is a Divine Revelation.*

That that concluſion is fairly and undeniably drawn from the premiſes, I think muſt

* Acts xxii. 9.

be

be owned, unleſs ſome probable cauſe can be aſſigned, to account for thoſe facts ſo authentically related in the Acts of the Apoſtles, and atteſted in his Epiſtles by St. *Paul* himſelf, other than any of thoſe which I have conſidered; and this I am confident cannot be done. It muſt be therefore accounted for by the power of God. That God ſhould work miracles for the eſtabliſhment of a moſt holy religion, which from the inſuperable difficulties that ſtood in the way of it, could not have eſtabliſhed itſelf without ſuch an aſſiſtance, is no way repugnant to human reaſon: but that without any miracle ſuch things ſhould have happened as no adequate natural cauſes can be aſſigned for, is what human reaſon cannot believe.

To impute them to magick, or the power of Dæmons (which was the reſource of the *Heathens* and *Jews* againſt the notoriety of the miracles performed by *Chriſt* and his Diſciples) is by no means agreeable to the notions of thoſe who in this age diſbelieve Chriſtianity. It will therefore be needleſs to ſhew the weakneſs of that ſuppoſition: But that ſuppoſition itſelf is no inconſiderable argument of the truth of the facts. Next to the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts, the ſtrongeſt wit-

neſſes of the undeniable force of that truth are *Celſus* and *Julian*, and other ancient opponents of the Chriſtian religion, who were obliged to ſolve what they could not contradict, by ſuch an irrational and abſurd imagination.

The diſpute was not then between faith and reaſon, but between religion and ſuperſtition. Superſtition aſcribed to cabaliſtical names, or magical ſecrets, ſuch operations as carried along with them evident marks of the Divine power: religion aſcribed them to God, and reaſon declared itſelf on that ſide of the queſtion. Upon what grounds then can we now overturn that deciſion? Upon what grounds can we reject the unqueſtionable teſtimony given by St. *Paul*, that he was called by God to be a Diſciple and Apoſtle of *Chriſt?* It has been ſhewn, that we cannot impute it either to enthuſiaſm or fraud; how ſhall we then reſiſt the conviction of ſuch a proof? Does the doctrine he preached contain any precepts againſt the law of morality, that natural law written by God in the hearts of mankind? If it did, I confeſs that none of the arguments I have made uſe of could prove ſuch a doctrine to come from *him*. But this

is

ſo far from being the caſe, that even thoſe who reject Chriſtianity as a Divine Revelation, acknowledge the morals delivered by *Chriſt* and by his Apoſtles to be worthy of God. It is then on account of the myſteries in the Goſpel that the facts are denied, though ſupported by evidence, which in all other caſes would be allowed to contain the cleareſt conviction, and cannot in this be rejected without reducing the mind to a ſtate of abſolute ſcepticiſm, and overturning thoſe rules by which we judge of all evidence, and of the truth or credibility of all other facts? But this is plainly to give up the uſe of our underſtanding where we are able to uſe it moſt properly, in order to apply it to things of which it is not a competent judge. The motives and reaſons upon which Divine wiſdom may think proper to act, as well as the manner in which it acts, muſt often lie out of the reach of our underſtanding; but the motives and reaſons of human actions, and the manner in which they are performed, are all in the ſphere of human knowledge; and upon them we may judge, with a well-grounded confidence, when they are fairly propoſed to our conſideration.

It is incomparably more probable that a Revelation from God concerning the ways of his Providence, ſhould contain in it matters above the capacity of our minds to comprehend, than that St. *Paul*, or indeed any of the other Apoſtles ſhould have acted, as we know that they did, upon any other foundations than certain knowledge of *Chriſt's* being riſen from the dead; or ſhould have ſucceeded in the work they undertook, without the aid of miraculous powers. To the former of theſe propoſitions I may give my aſſent without any direct oppoſition of reaſon to faith; but in admitting the latter, I muſt believe againſt all thoſe probabilities that are the rational grounds of aſſent.

Nor do they who reject the Chriſtian religion, becauſe of the difficulties which occur in its myſteries, conſider how far that objection will go againſt other ſyſtems, both of religion and of philoſophy, which they themſelves profeſs to admit. There are in *Deiſm* itſelf, the moſt ſimple of all religious opinions, ſeveral difficulties, for which human reaſon can but ill account; which may therefore be not improperly ſtiled *Articles of Faith*. Such is the origin of evil under the govern-

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ment of an all-good and all-powerful God; a queſtion ſo hard, that the inability of ſolving it in a ſatisfactory manner to their apprehenſions, has driven ſome of the greateſt philoſophers into the monſtrous and ſenſeleſs opinions of *Manicheiſm*, and Atheiſm. Such is the reconciling the preſcience of *God* with the free-will of man, which, after much thought on the ſubject, Mr. *Locke* * fairly confeſſes he could not do, though he acknowledged both; and what Mr. *Locke* could not do, in reaſoning upon ſubjects of a metaphyſical nature, I am apt to think few men, if any, can hope to perform.

Such is alſo the creation of the world at any ſuppoſed time, or the *eternal production* of it from God; it being almoſt equally hard, according to mere philoſophical notions, either to admit that the goodneſs of God could remain unexerted through all eternity before the time of ſuch a creation, let it be ſet back ever ſo far, or to conceive an *eternal production*; which words, ſo applied, are inconſiſtent and contradictory terms; the ſolution commonly given by a compariſon to

* See his Letter to Mr. *Molyneux*, p. 509. v. 3.

the

the emanation of light from the ſun, not being adequate to it, or juſt; for light is a *quality* inherent in fire, and naturally emanating from it; whereas *matter* is not a *quality* inherent or emanating from the Divine eſſence, but of a different ſubſtance and nature, and if not *independent* and *ſelf-exiſting*, muſt have been *created* by a mere act of the Divine *will*; and if *created*, then not *eternal*, the idea of *creation* implying a time *when the ſubſtance created did not exiſt*. But if, to get rid of this difficulty, we have recourſe, as many of the ancient philoſophers had, to the *independent exiſtence of matter*, then we muſt admit *two ſelf-exiſting principles*, which is quite inconſiſtent with genuine theiſm, or natural reaſon. Nay, could *that* be admitted, it would yet not clear up the doubt, unleſs we ſuppoſe not only the eternal exiſtence of matter independent of God, but that it was from eternity in the *order* and *beauty* we ſee it in now, without any *agency* of the Divine power; otherwiſe the ſame difficulty will always occur, why it was not before put into that *order* and ſtate of *perfection*; or how the goodneſs of God could ſo long remain in a ſtate of inaction, *unexerted* and *unemployed*.

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For were the time of ſuch an *exertion* of it put back ever ſo far; if, inſtead of five or ſix thouſand years, we were to ſuppoſe millions of millions of ages to have paſſed ſince the world * was reduced out of a *Chaos* to an *harmonious* and *regular form*, ſtill a whole *eternity* muſt have preceded that date, during which the Divine attributes did not exert themſelves in *that beneficent work*, ſo ſuitable to them, that the conjectures of human reaſon can find no cauſe for its being delayed.

But becauſe of theſe difficulties, or any other that may occur in the ſyſtem of Deiſm, no wiſe man will deny the *being* of God, or his *infinite wiſdom*, *goodneſs*, and *power*, which are proved by ſuch evidence as carries the cleareſt and ſtrongeſt conviction, and cannot be refuſed without involving the mind in *far greater difficulties*, even in downright *abſurdities* and *impoſſibilities*. The only part there-

* By the world I do not mean this earth alone, but the whole material *univerſe* with all its inhabitants. Even *created ſpirits* fall under the ſame reaſoning; for they muſt alſo have had a *beginning*, and before that *beginning* an eternity muſt have preceded.

fore

fore that can be taken is, to account in the beſt manner that our weak reaſon is able to do, for ſuch ſeeming objections; and where *that* fails, to acknowledge its weakneſs, and acquieſce under the certainty, that our very imperfect knowledge or judgment cannot be the meaſure of the Divine wiſdom, or the univerſal ſtandard of truth. So likewiſe it is with reſpect to the *Chriſtian religion*. Some *difficulties* occur in that Revelation, which human reaſon can hardly clear; but as the truth of it ſtands upon evidence ſo ſtrong and convincing, that it cannot be denied without much *greater difficulties* than thoſe that attend the belief of it, as I have before endeavoured to prove, we ought not to reject it upon ſuch objections, however mortifying they may be to our pride. *That* indeed would have all things made plain to us; but God has thought proper to proportion our knowledge to our *wants*, not our *pride*. All that concerns our *duty* is clear; and as to other points either of natural or revealed religion, if he has left ſome obſcurities in them, is that an reaſonable cauſe of complaint? Not to rejoice in the benefit of what he has graciouſly allowed us to know, from a preſumptu-

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ous diſguſt at our incapacity of knowing more, is as abſurd as it would be to refuſe to *walk*, becauſe we cannot fly.

From the arrogant ignorance of metaphyſical reaſonings, aiming at matters above our knowledge, aroſe all the ſpeculative impiety, and many of the worſt ſuperſtitions of the old heathen world, before the Goſpel was preached to bring man back again to the primitive faith; and from the ſame ſource have ſince flowed ſome of the greateſt corruptions of the Evangelical truth, and the moſt inveterate prejudices againſt it: an effect juſt as natural as for our eyes to grow weak, and even blind, by being ſtrained to look at objects too diſtant, or not made for them to ſee.

Are then our intellectual faculties of no uſe in religion? Yes, undoubtedly, of the moſt neceſſary uſe, when rightly employed. The proper employment of them is to diſtinguiſh its genuine doctines from others erroneouſly or corruptly aſcribed to it; to conſider the importance and purport of them, with the connection they bear one to another; but firſt of all to examine with the ſtricteſt attention the evidence by which religion is proved,

internal

internal as well as *external*. If the *external* evidence be convincingly ſtrong, and there is no *internal* proof of its falſhood, but much to ſupport and confirm its truth, then ſurely no difficulties ought to prevent our giving a full aſſent and belief to it. It is our duty indeed to endeavour to find the beſt ſolutions we can to them; but where no ſatisfactory ones are to be found, it is no leſs our duty to acquieſce with humility, and believe that to be right which we know is above us, and belonging to a wiſdom ſuperior to ours.

Nor let it be ſaid, that this will be an argument for the admitting all doctrines, however abſurd, that may have been grafted upon the Chriſtian faith. Thoſe which can plainly be proved *not to belong to it*, fall not under the reaſoning I have laid down (and certainly none do belong to it which contradict either our *clear, intuitive knowledge*, or the *evident principles and dictates of reaſon*). I ſpeak only of difficulties which attend the belief of the Goſpel in ſome of its pure and eſſential doctrines plainly and evidently delivered there, which being made known to us by a *Revelation* ſupported by *proofs* that our reaſon *ought to admit*, and not being ſuch things

things as it can *certainly know to be falſe*, muſt be received by it as *objects of faith*, though they are ſuch as it could not have diſcovered by any natural means, and ſuch as are difficult to be conceived, or ſatisfactorily explained, by its limited powers. If *the glorious light of the Goſpel* be ſometimes overcaſt with clouds of doubt, ſo is the light of our *reaſon* too. But ſhall we deprive ourſelves of the advantage of *either*, becauſe thoſe clouds cannot perhaps be entirely removed while we remain in this mortal life? Shall we obſtinately and frowardly ſhut our eyes againſt *that day-ſpring from on high that has viſited us*, becauſe we are not as yet able to bear the full blaze of his beams? Indeed, not even in heaven itſelf, not in the higheſt ſtate of perfection to which a finite being can ever attain, will all the counſels of Providence, all the *height* and the *depth* of the infinite wiſdom of God, be ever diſcloſed or underſtood. *Faith* even then will be neceſſary: and there will be *myſteries* which cannot be penetrated by the moſt exalted archangel, and *truths* which cannot be known by him otherwiſe than from *Revelation*, or believed upon any other ground of aſſent than a *ſubmiſſive*

miſſive confidence in the Divine wiſdom. What, then, ſhall man preſume that his weak and narrow underſtanding is ſufficient to guide him *into all truth*, without any need of *Revelation* or *Faith?* Shall he complain that *the ways of God are not like his ways*, and *paſt his finding out?* True philoſophy as well as true Chriſtianity, would teach us a wiſer and modeſter part. It would teach us to be content within thoſe bounds which God has aſſigned to us, *caſting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Chriſt* *.

* 2 Cor. x. 5.

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THE

TRIAL

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RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

WE were, not long ſince, ſome Gentlemen of the Inns of Court, together, each to the other ſo well known, that no man's preſence was a conſinement to any other from ſpeaking his mind on any ſubject that happened to ariſe in converſation. The meeting was without deſign, and the diſcourſe, as in like caſes, various. Among other things we fell upon the ſubject of *Woolſton's* trial and conviction, which had happened ſome few days before: that led to a debate how the law ſtands in ſuch caſes, what

puniſhment it inflicts; and, in general, whether the law ought at all to interpoſe in controverſies of this kind. We were not agreed in theſe points. One, who maintained the favourable ſide to *Woolſton*, diſcovered a great liking and approbation of his diſcourſes againſt the miracles of Chriſt, and ſeemed to think his arguments unanſwerable. To which another replied, I wonder that one of your abilities, and bred to the profeſſion of the law, which teaches us to conſider the nature of evidence, and its proper weight, can be of that opinion, I am ſure you would be unwilling to determine a property of five ſhillings upon ſuch evidence, as you now think material enough to overthrow the miracles of Chriſt.

It may eaſily be imagined that this opened a door to much diſpute, and determined the converſation for the remainder of the evening to this ſubject. The diſpute ran through almoſt all the particulars mentioned in *Woolſton's* pieces; but the thread of it was broken by ſeveral digreſſions, and the purſuit of things which were brought accidentally into the diſcourſe. At length one of the company ſaid pleaſantly, Gentlemen, you do not argue like lawyers; if I were Judge in this

this cauſe, I would hold you better to the point. The company took the hint, and cried they ſhould be glad to have the cauſe re-heard, and him to be the Judge. The Gentlemen who had engaged with mettle and ſpirit in a diſpute which aroſe accidentally, ſeemed very unwilling to be drawn into a formal controverſy; and eſpecially the Gentleman who argued againſt *Woolſton*, thought the matter grew too ſerious for him, and excuſed himſelf from undertaking a controverſy in religion, of all others the moſt momentous: but he was told that the argument ſhould be confined merely to the nature of the evidence, and that might be conſidered without entering into any ſuch controverſy as he would avoid; and to bring the matter within bounds, and under one view, the evidence of Chriſt's Reſurrection, and the exceptions taken to it, ſhould be the only ſubject of the conference. With much perſuaſion, he ſuffered himſelf to be perſuaded, and promiſed to give the company, and their new made Judge, a meeting that day fortnight. The Judge and the reſt of the company were for bringing on the cauſe a week ſooner; but the Counſel for *Woolſton* took the matter up, and ſaid, Conſider, ſir, the Gentle-

man is not to argue out of *Littleton*, *Plowden*, or *Coke*, authors to him well known; but he muſt have his authorities from *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*; and a fortnight is time little enough of all conſcience to gain a familiarity with a new acquaintance; and, turning to the Gentleman, he ſaid, I will call upon you before the fortnight is out, to ſee how reverend an appearance you make behind *Hammond* on the New Teſtament, a Concordance on one hand, and a folio Bible with references on the other. You ſhall be welcome, ſir, replied the Gentleman, and perhaps you may find ſome company more to your own taſte; he is but a poor Counſel who ſtudies on one ſide of the queſtion only, and therefore I will have your friend *Woolſton*, *T—l*, and *C—s*, to entertain you when you do me the favour of the viſit. Upon this we parted in good humour, and all pleaſed with the appointment made, except the two Gentlemen who were to provide the entertainment.

THE

THE SECOND DAY.

THE company met at the time appointed: but it happened in this, as in like cafes it often does, that fome friends to fome of the company, who were not of the party the firſt day, had got notice of the meeting; and the Gentlemen who were to debate the queſtion, found they had a more numerous audience than they expected or deſired. He eſpecially who was to maintain the evidence of the Reſurrection, began to excuſe the neceſſity he was under of diſappointing their expectation, alledging, that he was not prepared; and he had perſiſted in excuſing himſelf, but that the ſtrangers, who perceived what the caſe was, offered to withdraw, which the Gentleman would by no means conſent to: they inſiſting to go, he ſaid, he would much rather ſubmit himſelf to their candor unprepared as he was, than be guilty of ſo much rudeneſs, as to force them to leave the company. Upon which one of the company, ſmiling, ſaid, it happens luckily that our number is increaſed; when we were laſt to-

gether, we appointed a Judge, but we quite forgot a Jury, and now, I think, we are good men and true, ſufficient to make one. This thought was purſued in ſeveral alluſions to legal proceedings, which created ſome mirth, and had this good effect, that it diſperſed the ſolemn air which the mutual compliments upon the difficulty before-mentioned had introduced, and reſtored the eaſe and good-humour natural to the converſation of gentlemen.

The Judge perceiving the diſpoſition of the company, thought it a proper time to begin, and called out, Gentlemen of the Jury, take your places; and immediately ſeated himſelf at the upper end of the table: the company ſat round him, and the Judge called upon the Counſel for *Woolſton* to begin.

Mr. A. *Counſel for* Woolſton, addreſſing himſelf to the Judge, ſaid,

May it pleaſe your Lordſhip; I conceive the Gentleman on the other ſide ought to begin, and lay his evidence, which he intends to maintain, before the Court: till that is done, it is to no purpoſe for me to object. I may perhaps object to ſomething which he will not admit to be any part of his evidence, and therefore, I apprehend,

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the evidence ought in the firſt place to be diſtinctly ſtated.

Judge. Mr. *B.* What ſay you to that?

Mr. B. *Counſel on the other ſide:*

My Lord, if the evidence I am to maintain, were to ſupport any new claim, if I were to gain any thing which I am not already poſſeſſed of, the Gentleman would be in the right; but the evidence is old, and is matter of record, and I have been long in poſſeſſion of all that I claim under it. If the Gentleman has any thing to ſay to diſpoſſeſs me, let him produce it; otherwiſe I have no reaſon to bring my own title into queſtion. And this I take to be the known method of proceeding in ſuch caſes; no man is obliged to produce his title to his poſſeſſion; it is ſufficient if he maintains it when it is called in queſtion.

Mr. *A.* Surely, my Lord, the Gentleman miſtakes the caſe: I can never admit myſelf to be out of poſſeſſion of my underſtanding and reaſon; and ſince he would put me out of this poſſeſſion, and compel me to admit things incredible, in virtue of the evidence he maintains, he ought to ſet forth his claim, or leave the world to be directed by common ſenſe.

Judge. Sir, you ſay right: upon ſuppoſition that the truth of the Chriſtian religion were the point in judgment. In that caſe it would be neceſſary to produce the evidence for the Chriſtian religion; but the matter now before the Court is, Whether the objections produced by Mr. *Woolſton*, are of weight to overthrow the evidence of Chriſt's Reſurrection. You ſee then the evidence of the Reſurrection is ſuppoſed to be what it is on both ſides, and the thing immediately in judgment, is the value of the objections, and therefore they muſt be ſet forth. The Court will be bound to take notice of the evidence, which is admitted as a fact on both parts. Go on Mr. *A.*

Mr. *A.* My Lord, I ſubmit to the direction of the Court. I cannot but obſerve that the Gentleman on the other ſide, unwilling as he ſeems to be to ſtate his evidence, did not forget to lay in his claim to preſcription, which is, perhaps, in truth, though he has too much ſkill to own it, the very ſtrength of his cauſe. I do allow that the Gentleman maintains nothing but what his father and grandfather, and his anceſtors, beyond time of man's memory, maintained before him. I allow too, that preſcription in

many

many caſes makes a good title; but it muſt always be with this condition, that the thing is capable of being preſcribed for: and I inſiſt, that preſcription cannot run againſt reaſon and common ſenſe. Cuſtoms may be pleaded by preſcription; but if, upon ſhewing the cuſtom, any thing unreaſonable appears in it, the preſcription fails; for length of time works nothing towards the eſtabliſhing any thing that could never have a legal commencement. And if this objection will overthrow all preſcriptions for cuſtoms, the miſchief of which extends perhaps to one poor village only, and affects them in no greater a concern than their right of common upon a ragged mountain, ſhall it not much more prevail, when the intereſt of mankind is concerned, and in no leſs a point than his happineſs in this life, and in all his hopes for futurity? Beſides, if preſcription muſt be allowed in this caſe, how will you deal with it in others? What will you ſay to the ancient *Perſians*, and their fire-altars? Nay, what to the *Turks*, who have been long enough in poſſeſſion of their faith to plead———

Mr. *B.* I beg pardon for interrupting the Gentleman. But it is to ſave him trouble. He

is going into his favourite common-place, and has brought us from *Perſia* to *Turkey* already; and if he goes on, I know we muſt follow him round the globe. To ſave us from this long journey, I will wave all advantage from the antiquity of the Reſurrection, and the general reception the belief of it has found in the world; and am content to conſider it as a fact which happened but laſt year, and was never heard of either by the Gentleman's grandfather, or by mine.

Mr. *A.* I ſhould not have taken quite ſo long a journey as the Gentleman imagines, nor indeed, need any man go far from home to find inſtances to the purpoſe I was upon. But ſince this advantage is quitted, I am as willing to ſpare my pains, as the Gentleman is deſirous that I ſhould. And yet I ſuſpect ſome art even in this conceſſion, fair and candid as it ſeems to be. For I am perſuaded, that one reaſon, perhaps the main reaſon, why men believe this hiſtory of Jeſus, is, that they cannot conceive that any one ſhould attempt, much leſs ſucceed in ſuch an attempt as this, upon the foundation of mere human cunning and policy; and it is worth the while to go round the globe, as the

Gentleman

Gentleman expreſſed himſelf, to ſee various inſtances of the like kind, in order to remove this prejudice. But I ſtand corrected, and will go directly to the point now in judgment.

Mr. *B.* My Lord, the Gentleman in juſtification of his firſt argument, has entered upon another of a very different kind. I think he is ſenſible of it, and ſeeming to yield up one of his popular topics, is indeed artfully getting rid of another; which has made a very good figure in many late writings, but will not bear in any place, where he who maintains it may be aſked queſtions. The mere antiquity of the Reſurrection I gave up; for if the evidence was not good at firſt, it cannot be good now. The Gentleman is willing, he ſays, to ſpare us his hiſtory of ancient errors, and intimates, that upon this account he paſſes over many inſtances of fraud, that were like in circumſtances to the caſe before us. By no means, my Lord, let them be paſſed over. I would not have the main ſtrength of his cauſe betrayed in complaiſance to me. Nothing can be more material, than to ſhew a fraud of this kind, that prevailed univerſally in the world. Chriſt Jeſus declared himſelf a prophet, and put the proof of his miſſion

miſſion on this,—that he ſhould die openly and publicly, and riſe again the third day. This ſurely was the hardeſt plot in the world to be managed: and if there be one inſtance of this kind, or in any degree like it, by all means let it be produced.

Mr. *A.* My Lord, there has hardly been an inſtance of a falſe religion in the world, but it has alſo afforded a like inſtance to this before us. Have they not all pretended to inſpiration? Upon what foot did *Pythagoras*, *Numa*, and others ſet up? Did they not all converſe with the gods, and pretend to deliver oracles?

Mr. *B.* This only ſhews that revelation is by the common conſent of mankind, the very beſt foundation of religion, and therefore every impoſtor pretends to it. But is a man's hiding himſelf in a cave for ſome years, and then coming out into the world, to be compared to a man's dying and riſing to life again? So far from it, that you and I and every man may do the one, but no man can do the other.

Mr. *A.* Sir, I ſuppoſe it will be allowed to be as great a thing to go to heaven and converſe with angels, and with God, and to come down to the earth again, as it is to die and riſe again.

Now

Now this very thing *Mahomet* pretended to do, and all his diſciples believe it. Can you deny this fact?

Mr. *B.* Deny it, Sir? No. But tell us who went with *Mahomet?* who were his witneſſes? I expect before we have done, to hear of the guards ſet over the ſepulchre of Chriſt, and the ſeal of the ſtone: what guard watched *Mahomet* in his going or returning? What ſeals and credentials had he? He himſelf pretends to none. His followers pretend to nothing but his own word. We are now to conſider the evidence of Chriſt's Reſurrection, and you think to parallel it by producing a caſe, for which no one ever pretended there was any evidence. You have *Mahomet's* word, and no man ever told a lie but you had *his* word for the truth of what he ſaid; and therefore you need not go round the globe to find ſuch inſtances as theſe. But this ſtory, it is ſaid, has gained great credit, and is received by many nations: very well: and how was it received? Was not every man converted to this faith with the ſword at his throat? In our caſe, every witneſs to the Reſurrection, and every believer of it was hourly expoſed to death: in the other caſe, whoever

refuſed to believe, died, or what was as bad, lived a wretched, conquered ſlave: and will you pretend theſe caſes to be alike? One caſe indeed there was within our own memory, which in ſome circumſtances came near to the caſe now before us. The *French* prophets put the credit of their miſſion upon the reſurrection of Dr. *Emmes*, and gave public notice of it. If the Gentleman pleaſes to make uſe of this inſtance, it is at his ſervice.

Mr. *A.* The inſtance of Dr. *Emmes* is ſo far to the purpoſe, that it ſhews to what lengths enthuſiaſm will carry men. And why might not the ſame thing happen at *Jeruſalem*, which happened but a few years ago in our own country? *Matthew* and *John*, and the reſt of them, managed that affair with more dexterity than the *French* prophets; ſo that the reſurrection of Jeſus gained credit in the world, and the *French* prophets ſunk under their ridiculous pretenſions. That's all the difference.

Mr. *B.* Is it ſo? And a very wide difference, I promiſe you. In one caſe, every thing happened that was proper to convince the world of the truth of the Reſurrection; in the other, the event manifeſted the cheat; and upon the view

of

of theſe circumſtances, you think it ſufficient to ſay, with great coolneſs, that is all the difference. Why, what difference do you expect between truth and falſhood? What diſtinction ——

Judge. Gentlemen, you forget that you are in a Court, and are falling into dialogue. Courts do not allow of chit-chat. Look ye, the evidence of the Reſurrection of Jeſus is before the Court, recorded by *Matthew*, *Mark*, and others. You muſt take it as it is: you can neither make it better nor worſe. Theſe witneſſes are accuſed of giving falſe evidence. Come to the point; and let us hear what you have to offer, to prove the accuſation.

Mr. *B.* Is it your meaning, ſir, that the objections ſhould be ſtated and argued all together, and that the anſwer ſhould be to the whole at once? Or would you have the objections argued ſingly, and anſwered ſeparately by themſelves?

Judge. I think this Court may diſpenſe with the ſtrict forms of legal proceedings, and therefore I leave this to the choice of the Jury.

After the Jury had conſulted together, the Foreman roſe up.

The

The Foreman of the Jury. We desire to hear the objections argued and answered separately. We shall be better able to form a judgment by hearing the answer, while the objection is fresh in our minds.

Judge. Gentlemen, you hear the opinion of the Jury. Go on.

Mr. *A.* I am now to disclose to you a scene, of all others the most surprising. * "The "Resurrection has been long talked of, and to "the amazement of every one who can think "freely, has been believed through all ages of "the Church." This general and constant belief creates in most minds a presumption that it was founded on good evidence. In other cases the evidence supports the credit of the history; but here the evidence itself is presumed only upon the credit which the story has gained †. I wish the books dispersed against Jesus by the ancient *Jews* had not been lost; for they would have given us a clear insight into this contrivance. But it is happy for us, that the very account given by the pretended witnesses of this fact is sufficient to destroy the credit of it.

* *Sixth Discourse*, p. 17. † Ibid. p. 4.

The

The Reſurrection was not a thing contrived for its own ſake. No! It was undertaken to ſupport great views, and for the ſake of great conſequences that were to attend it. It will be neceſſary therefore to lay before you thoſe views, that you may the better judge of this part of the contrivance, when you have the whole ſcene before you.

The *Jews* were a weak, ſuperſtitious people, and, as is common among ſuch people, gave great credit to ſome traditionary prophecies about their own country. They had beſides ſome old books among them, which they eſteemed to be writings of certain prophets, who had formerly lived among them, and whoſe memory they had in great veneration. From ſuch old books and traditions they formed many extravagant expectations; and, among the reſt, one was, that ſome time or other a great victorious Prince ſhould riſe among them, and ſubdue all their enemies, and make them lords of the world *. In *Auguſtus*'s time they were in a low ſtate, reduced under the *Roman* yoke; and as they never wanted a deliverer more, ſo the eagerneſs

* See *Scheme of Literal Prophecy*, p. 26.

of

of this hope, as it happens to weak minds, turned into a firm expectation that he would ſoon come. This proved a temptation to ſome bold, and to ſome cunning men, to perſonate the Prince ſo much expected; and * "nothing "is more natural and common to promote re- "bellions, than to ground them on new pro- "phecies, or new interpretations of old ones: "prophecies being ſuited to the vulgar ſuper- "ſtition, and operating with the force of reli- "gion." Accordingly many ſuch impoſtors roſe, pretending to be the victorious Prince expected; and they and the people who followed them periſhed in the folly of their attempt.

But Jeſus, knowing that victories and triumphs are not things to be counterfeited; that the people were not to be delivered from the *Roman* yoke by ſlight of hand; and having no hope of being able to cope with the Emperor of *Rome* in good earneſt, took another and more ſucceſsful method to carry on his deſign. He took upon him to be the Prince foretold in the ancient Prophets; but then he inſiſted that the true ſenſe of the prophecies had been miſtaken;

* *Scheme of Literal Prophecy*, p. 27.

that

that they related not to the kingdoms of this world, but to the kingdom of heaven; that the Meſſias was not to be a conquering Prince, but a ſuffering one; that he was not to come with horſes of war, and chariots of war, but was to be meek and lowly, and riding on an aſs. By this means he got the common and neceſſary foundation for a new revelation, which is to be built and founded on a precedent revelation*.

To carry on this deſign, he made choice of twelve men of no fortunes or education, and of ſuch underſtandings as gave no jealouſy that they would diſcover the plot. And what is moſt wonderful, and ſhews their ability, whilſt the Maſter was preaching the kingdom of heaven, theſe poor men, not weaned from the prejudices of their country, expected every day that he would declare himſelf a king, and were quarrelling who ſhould be his firſt miniſter. This expectation had a good effect on the ſervice, for it kept them conſtant to their maſter.

I muſt obſerve farther, that the *Jews* were under ſtrange apprehenſions of ſupernatural

* See *Diſcourſe of the Grounds*, &c. ch. iv.

powers;

powers; and as their own religion was founded on the belief of certain miracles, ſaid to be wrought by their lawgiver *Moſes*, ſo were they ever running after wonders and miracles, and ready to take up with any ſtories of this kind. Now as ſomething extraordinary was neceſſary to ſupport the pretenſions of Jeſus, he dextrouſly laid hold on this weakneſs of the people; and ſet up to be a wonder-worker. His diſciples were well qualified to receive this impreſſion; they ſaw, or thought they ſaw, many ſtrange things, and were able to ſpread the fame and report of them abroad.

This conduct had the deſired ſucceſs. The whole country was alarmed, and full of the news of a great prophet's being come among them. They were too full of their own imagination, to attend to the notion of a kingdom of heaven: here was one mighty in deed and in word; and they concluded, he was the very Prince their nation expected. Accordingly they once attempted to ſet him up for a King; and at another time attended him in triumph to *Jeruſalem*. This natural conſequence opens the natural deſign of the attempt. If things had gone on ſucceſsfully to the end, it is probable the kingdom

of

heaven would have been changed into a kingdom of this world. The deſign indeed failed, by the impatience and over-haſtineſs of the multitude, which alarmed not only the chief of the *Jews*, but the *Roman* governor alſo.

The caſe being come to this point, and Jeſus ſeeing that he could not eſcape being put to death, he declared, that the ancient prophets had foretold that the Meſſias ſhould die upon a croſs, and that he ſhould riſe again on the third day. Here was the foundation laid for the continuing this plot; which otherwiſe had died with it's author. This was his legacy to his followers; which having been well managed by them and their ſucceſſors, has at laſt produced a kingdom indeed; a kingdom of prieſts, who have governed the world for many ages, and have been ſtrong enough to ſet Kings and Emperors at defiance. But ſo it happens, the ancient prophets appealed to are ſtill extant; and there being no ſuch prophecies of the Death and Reſurrection of the Meſſias, they are a ſtanding evidence againſt this ſtory. As he expected, ſo it happened, that he died on a croſs. And the proſecuting of this contrivance was left to the

manage

management of his diſciples and followers. Their part is next to be conſidered———

Mr. *B.* My Lord, ſince it is your opinion that the objections ſhould be conſidered ſingly, and the Gentleman has carried this ſcheme down to the death of Chriſt, I think he is come to a proper reſt; and that it is agreeable to your intention, that I ſhould be admitted to anſwer.

Judge. You ſay right, ſir. Let us hear what you anſwer to this charge.

Mr. *B.* My Lord, I was unwilling to diſturb the Gentleman by breaking in upon his ſcheme; otherwiſe I ſhould have reminded him, that this Court ſits to examine evidence, and not to be entertained with fine imaginations. You have had a ſcheme laid before you, but not one bit of evidence to ſupport any part of it; no, not ſo much as a pretence to any evidence. The Gentleman, I remember, was very ſorry that the old books of the *Jews* were loſt, which would, as he ſuppoſes, have ſet forth all this matter; and I agree with him, that he has much reaſon to be ſorry, conſidering his great ſcarcity of proof. And ſince I have mentioned this, that I may not be to return to it again, I would aſk the Gentle-

man

man now, how he knows there ever were ſuch books? And ſince if ever there were any, they are loſt, how he knows what they contained? I doubt I ſhall have frequent occaſion to aſk ſuch queſtions. It would indeed be a ſufficient anſwer to the whole, to repeat the ſeveral ſuppoſitions that have been made, and to call for the evidence upon which they ſtand. This would plainly diſcover every part of the ſtory to be mere fiction. But ſince the Gentleman ſeems to have endeavoured to bring under one view, the many inſinuations which have of late been ſpread abroad by different hands, and to work the whole into a conſiſtent ſcheme: I will, if your patience ſhall permit, examine this plot, and ſee to whom the honour of the contrivance belongs.

The Gentleman begins with expreſſing "his "amazement, that the reſurrection has been "believed in all ages of the Church." If you aſk him, why? he muſt anſwer, becauſe the account of it is a forgery: for 'tis no amazement to him ſurely, that a true account ſhould be generally well received. So that this remark proceeds indeed from confidence rather than amazement; and comes only to this, that

he is ſure there was no reſurrection: and I am ſure this is no evidence that there was none. Whether he is miſtaken in his confidence, or I in mine, the Court muſt judge.

The Gentleman's obſervation, that the general belief of the reſurrection creates a preſumption that it ſtands upon good evidence, and therefore people look no farther, but follow their fathers, as their fathers did their grandfathers before them, is in great meaſure true; but it is a truth nothing to his purpoſe. He allows that the reſurrection has been believed in all ages of the Church; that is, from the very time of the reſurrection: What then prevailed with thoſe who firſt received it? They certainly did not follow the example of their fathers. Here then is the point, how did this fact gain credit in the world at firſt? Credit it has gained, without doubt. If the multitude [illegible] into this belief through prejudice, [illegible] and for company ſake, they do in this matter; and no more, nor otherwiſe, than they do in all caſes. And it cannot be denied, but that truth may be received through prejudice (as it is called), *i. e.* without examining the proof or merits of the cauſe, as well as falſhood. What general truth

is

is there, the merits of which all the world, or the hundredth part, has examined? It is finely ſaid ſomewhere, *That the prieſt only continues what the nurſe began:* but the life of the remark conſiſts in the quaintneſs of the antitheſis between the *nurſe* and the *prieſt:* and owes its ſupport much more to ſound than to ſenſe. For is it poſſible that children ſhould not hear ſomething of the common and popular opinions of their country, whether thoſe opinions be true or falſe? Do they not learn the common maxims of reaſon this way? Perhaps every man firſt learnt from his nurſe, that two and two make four; and whenever ſhe divides an apple among her children, ſhe inſtils into them this prejudice, that the whole is equal to its parts, and all the parts equal to the whole; and yet Sir *Iſaac Newton*, (ſhame on him) what work has he made, what a building has he erected upon the foundation of this nurſery learning? As to religion, there never was a religion, there never will be one, whether true or falſe, publicly owned in any country, but children have heard, and ever will hear, more or leſs of it from thoſe who are placed about them. And if this is, and ever muſt be the caſe, whether the religion be

the caſe, whether the religion be true or falſe; it is highly abſurd to lay ſtreſs on this obſervation, when the queſtion is about the truth of any religion; for the obſervation is indifferent to both ſides of the queſtion.

We are now, I think, got through the common-place learning, which muſt for ever, it ſeems, attend upon queſtions of this nature; and are coming to the very merits of the cauſe.

And here, the Gentleman on the other ſide thought proper to begin with an account of the people of the *Jews*: the people in whoſe country the fact is laid, and who were originally, and in ſome reſpects principally concerned in its conſequences.

They were, he ſays, a weak, ſuperſtitious people, and lived under the influence of certain pretended prophecies and predictions; that upon this ground they had, ſome time before the appearance of Chriſt Jeſus, conceived great expectations of the coming of a victorious Prince, who ſhould deliver them from the *Roman* yoke, and make them all Kings and Princes. He goes on then to obſerve, how liable the people were, in this ſtate of things, to be impoſed on, and led into rebellion, by any one who was bold enough

enough to take upon him to perſonate the Prince expected. He obſerves further, that in fact many ſuch impoſtors did ariſe, and deceived multitudes to their ruin and deſtruction.

I have laid theſe things together, becauſe I do not intend to diſpute theſe matters with the Gentleman. Whether the *Jews* were a weak and ſuperſtitious people, and influenced by falſe prophecies, or whether they had true prophecies among them, is not material to the preſent queſtion. It is enough for the Gentleman's argument, if I allow the fact to be as he has ſtated it; that they did expect a victorious Prince, that they were upon this account expoſed to be practiſed on by pretenders; and in fact were often ſo deluded.

This foundation being laid, it was natural to expect, and I believe your Lordſhip, and every one preſent did expect, that the Gentleman would go on to ſhow, that Jeſus laid hold of this opportunity, ſtruck in with the opinion of the people, and profeſſed himſelf to be the prince who was to work their deliverance. But ſo far, it ſeems, is this from being the caſe, that the charge upon Jeſus is, that he took the contrary part, and ſet up in oppoſition to all the

popular notions and prejudices of his country: that he interpreted the prophecies to another ſenſe and meaning than his countrymen did; and by his expoſitions took away all hopes of their ever ſeeing the victorious deliverer ſo much wanted and expected.

I know not how to bring the Gentleman's premiſes and his concluſion to any agreement; they ſeem to be at a great variance at preſent. If it be the likelieſt method for an impoſtor to ſucceed, to build on the popular opinions, prejudices and prophecies of the people; then ſurely an impoſtor cannot poſſibly take a worſe method than to ſet up in oppoſition to all the prejudices and prophecies of the country. Where was the art and cunning then of taking this method? Could any thing be expected from it, but hatred, contempt, and perſecution? And did Chriſt in fact meet with any other treatment from the *Jews?* And yet when he found, as the Gentleman allows he did, that he muſt periſh in this attempt, did he change his note? Did he come about, and drop any intimations agreeable to the notions of the people? It is not pretended. This, which in any other caſe, which ever happened, would be taken to be a plain

plain mark of great honeſty, or great ſtupidity, or of both, is in the preſent caſe, art, policy, and contrivance.

But it ſeems, Jeſus dared not ſet up to be the victorious Prince expected, for victories are not to be counterfeited. I hope it was no crime in him that he did not aſſume this falſe character, and try to abuſe the credulity of the people: if he had done ſo, it certainly would have been a crime; and therefore in this point at leaſt he is innocent. I do not ſuppoſe the Gentleman imagines that the *Jews* were well founded in their expectation of a temporal Prince; and therefore when Chriſt oppoſed this conceit at the manifeſt hazard of his life; as he certainly had truth on his ſide, ſo the preſumption is, that it was for the ſake of truth that he expoſed himſelf.

No; he wanted, we are told, the *common* and *neceſſary* foundation for a new revelation, the authority of an old one, to build on. Very well; I will not enquire how common or how neceſſary this foundation is to a new revelation; for be that caſe as it will, it is evident that in the method Chriſt took, he had not, nor could have the ſuppoſed advantage of ſuch foundation.

For why is this foundation neceſſary? A friend of the Gentleman's ſhall tell you: "Becauſe* "it muſt be difficult, if not impoſſible, to in- "troduce among men (who in all civilized "countries are bred up in the belief of ſome "revealed religion) a revealed religion wholly "new, or ſuch as has no reference to a preced- "ing one; for that would be to combat all men "on too many reſpects, and not to proceed on "a ſufficient number of principles neceſſary to "be aſſented to by thoſe, on whom the firſt im- "preſſions of a new religion are propoſed to be "made." You ſee now the reaſon of the ne- ceſſity of this foundation; it is that the new teacher may have the advantage of old popular opinions, and fix himſelf upon the prejudices of the people. Had Chriſt any ſuch advantages, or did he ſeek any ſuch? The people expected a victorious Prince; he told them they were miſtaken: they held as ſacred the traditions of the elders; he told them thoſe traditions made the law of God of none effect: they valued them- ſelves for being the peculiar people of God; he told them, that people from all quarters of the

* *Diſcourſe of the Grounds*, p. 24.

world

world ſhould be the people of God, and ſit down with *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, in the kingdom: they thought God could be worſhipped only at *Jeruſalem*; he told them God might and ſhould be worſhipped every where: they were ſuperſtitious in the obſervance of the ſabbath; he, according to their reckoning, broke it frequently: in a word, their waſhings of hands and pots, their ſuperſtitious diſtinctions of meats, their prayers in public, their villanies in ſecret, were all reproved, expoſed, and condemned by him; and the cry ran ſtrongly againſt him, that he came to deſtroy the law and the prophets. And now, ſir, what advantage had Chriſt of your common and neceſſary foundation? What *ſufficient number of principles* owned by the people, did he build on? If he adhered to the old revelation in the true ſenſe, or which is ſufficient to the preſent argument) in a ſenſe not received by the people, it was, in truth, the greateſt difficulty he had to ſtruggle with. And therefore what could tempt him, but purely a regard to truth, to take upon himſelf ſo many difficulties which might have been avoided, could he have been but ſilent as to the old revelation, and left the people to their imaginations?

To carry on this plot, we are told, that the next thing which Jeſus did, was to make choice of proper perſons to be his diſciples. The Gentleman has given us their character; but, as I ſuppoſe he has more employment for them before he has done, I deſire to defer the conſideration of their abilities and conduct, till I hear what work he has for them to do. I would only obſerve, that thus far this plot differs from all that ever I heard of. Impoſtors generally take advantage of the prejudices of the people; generally too they make choice of cunning dextrous fellows to manage under them: but in this caſe, Jeſus oppoſed all the notions of the people, and made choice of ſimpletons, it ſeems, to conduct his contrivances.

But what deſign, what real end was carrying on all this while? Why the Gentleman tells us, that the very thing diſclaimed, the temporal kingdom, was the real thing aimed at under this diſguiſe. He told the people there was no foundation to expect a temporal deliverer, warned them againſt all who ſhould ſet up thoſe pretenſions: he declared there was no ground from the ancient prophecies, to expect ſuch a prince; and yet by theſe very means he was

working his way to an opportunity of declaring himſelf to be the very Prince the people wanted. We are ſtill upon the marvellous; every ſtep opens new wonders. I blame not the Gentleman; for what but this can be imagined, to give any account of theſe meaſures imputed to Chriſt? Be this never ſo unlikely, yet this is the only thing that can be ſaid. Had Chriſt been charged with enthuſiaſm, it would not have been neceſſary to aſſign a reaſon for his conduct: madneſs is unaccountable: *Ratione modoque tractari non vult.* But when deſign, cunning, and fraud, are made the charge, and carried to ſuch an height, as to ſuppoſe him to be a party to the contrivance of a ſham reſurrection for himſelf; it is neceſſary to ſay, to what end this cunning tended. It was, we are told, to a kingdom; and indeed the temptation was little enough, conſidering that the chief conductor of the plot was to be crucified for his pains. But were the means made uſe of at all probable to attain the end? Yes, ſays the Gentleman, that cannot be diſputed; for they had really this effect. The people would have made him King. Very well; why was he not King then? Why, it happened unluckily that he would not accept the

offer, but withdrew himſelf from the multitude, and lay concealed till they were diſperſed. It will be ſaid, perhaps, that Jeſus was a better judge of affairs than the people, and ſaw that it was not yet time to accept the offer. Be it ſo: let us ſee then what follows.

The Government was alarmed, and Jeſus was looked on as a perſon dangerous to the ſtate; and he had diſcernment enough to ſee, that his death was determined and inevitable. What does he do then? Why, to make the beſt of a bad caſe, and to ſave the benefit of his undertaking to thoſe who were to ſucceed him, he pretends to propheſy of his death, which he knew could not be avoided: and further, that he ſhould riſe again the third day.—Men do not uſe to play tricks *in articulo mortis*; but this plot had nothing common, nothing in the ordinary way. But what if it ſhould appear, that, after the foretelling of his death, (through deſpair of his fortunes, it is ſaid) he had it in his power to ſet up for King once more, and once more refuſed the opportunity? Men in deſpair lay hold on the leaſt help, and never refuſe the greateſt. Now the caſe was really ſo; after he had foretold his crucifixion, he came to *Jeruſalem* in the

the triumphant manner the Gentleman mentioned: the people ſtrewed his way with boughs and flowers, and were all at his devotion; the *Jewiſh* governors lay ſtill for fear of the people. Why was not this opportunity laid hold on to ſeize the kingdom, or at leaſt to ſecure himſelf from the ignominious death he expected? For whoſe ſake was he contented to die? For whoſe ſake did he contrive this plot of his reſurrection? Wife and children he had none; his neareſt relations gave little credit to him; his diſciples were not fit even to be truſted with the ſecret, nor capable to manage any advantage that could ariſe from it. However, the Gentleman tells us, a kingdom has ariſen out of this plot, a kingdom of prieſts. But when did it ariſe? Some hundred years after the death of Chriſt, in oppoſition to his will, and almoſt to the ſubverſion of his religion. And yet, we are told, this kingdom was the thing he had in view. I am apt to think the Gentleman is perſuaded, that the dominion he complains of is contrary to the ſpirit of the Goſpel; I am ſure ſome of his friends have taken great pains to prove it ſo. How then can it be charged as the intention of the Goſpel to introduce it? Whatever the caſe

caſe was, it cannot ſurely be ſuſpected, that Chriſt died to make popes and cardinals. The alterations which have happened in the doctrines and practices of churches, ſince the Chriſtian religion was ſettled by thoſe who had an authentic commiſſion to ſettle it, are quite out of the queſtion, when the enquiry is about the truth of the Chriſtian religion. Chriſt and his Apoſtles did not vouch for the truth of all that ſhould be taught in the Church in future times. Nay, they foretold and forewarned the world againſt ſuch corrupt teachers. 'Tis therefore abſurd to challenge the religion of Chriſt, becauſe of the corruptions which have ſpread among Chriſtians. The Goſpel has no more concern with them, and ought no more to be charged with them, than with the doctrines of the *Alcoran*.

There is but one obſervation more, I think, which the Gentleman made under this head. Jeſus, he ſays, referred to the authority of ancient prophecies to prove that the Meſſias was to die and riſe again: the ancient books referred to are extant, and no ſuch prophecies, he ſays, are to be found. Now whether the Gentleman can find theſe prophecies, or no, is not material to the preſent queſtion. It is allowed, that Chriſt

Chriſt foretold his own death and reſurrection; if the reſurrection was managed by fraud, Chriſt was certainly in the fraud himſelf, by foretelling the fraud that was to happen: diſprove therefore the reſurrection, and we ſhall have no further occaſion for prophecy. On the other ſide; by foretelling the reſurrection, he certainly put the proof of his miſſion on the truth of the event. Whether it be the character of the Meſſias, in the ancient prophets or no, that he ſhould die and riſe again; without doubt Jeſus is not the Meſſias, if he did not riſe again. For by his own prophecy he made it part of the character of the Meſſias. If the event juſtified the prediction, it is ſuch an evidence as no man of ſenſe and reaſon can reject. One would naturally think, that the foretelling his reſurrection, and giving ſuch public notice to expect it, that his keeneſt enemies were fully appriſed of it, carried with it the greateſt mark of ſincere dealing. It ſtands thus far clear of the ſuſpicion of fraud; and had it proceeded from *enthuſiaſm*, and an heated imagination, the dead body at leaſt would have reſted in the grave, and without further evidence have confuted ſuch pretenſions. And ſince the dead body was not only

carried

carried openly to the grave, but there watched and guarded, and yet could never afterwards be found, never heard of more, as a dead body; there muſt of neceſſity have been either a real miracle, or a great fraud in this caſe. *Enthuſiaſm* dies with the man, and has no operation on his dead body. There is therefore here no medium; you muſt either admit the miracle, or prove the fraud.

Judge. Mr. *A.* You are at liberty either to reply to what has been ſaid under this head, or to go on with your cauſe.

Mr. *A.* My Lord, the obſervations I laid before you, were but introductory to the main evidences on which the merits of the cauſe muſt reſt. The gentleman concluded, that here muſt be a real miracle, or a great fraud; a fraud, he means, to which Jeſus in his life-time was a party. There is, he ſays, no medium: I beg his pardon: why might it not be an enthuſiaſm in the maſter which occaſioned the prediction, and fraud in the ſervants who put it in execution?

Mr. *B.* My Lord, this is new matter, and not a reply: the Gentleman opened this tranſaction as a fraud from one end to the other.

Now

Now he ſuppoſes Chriſt to have been an honeſt, poor *Enthuſiaſt*, and the Diſciples only to be cheats.

Judge. Sir, if you go to new matter, the Counſel on the other ſide muſt be admitted to anſwer.

Mr. *A.* My Lord, I have no ſuch intention, I was obſerving, that the account I gave of Jeſus was only to introduce the evidence that is to be laid before the Court. It cannot be expected that I ſhould know all the ſecret deſigns of this contrivance; eſpecially conſidering that we have but ſhort accounts of this affair, and thoſe too conveyed to us through hands of friends and parties to the plot. In ſuch a caſe, it is enough if we can imagine what the views probably were. And in ſuch caſe too, it muſt be eaſy for a Gentleman of parts to raiſe contrary imaginations, and to argue plauſibly from them. But the Gentleman has rightly obſerved, that if the reſurrection be a fraud, there is an end of all pretenſions, good or bad, that were to be ſupported by it. Therefore I ſhall go on to prove this fraud, which is one main part of the cauſe now to be determined.

I beg

I beg leave to remind you, that Jeſus, in his life-time, foretold his death, and that he ſhould riſe again the third day. The firſt part of his prediction was accompliſhed; he died upon the croſs, and was buried. I will not trouble you with the particulars of his crucifixion, death, and burial. It is a well known ſtory.

Mr. *B.* My Lord, I deſire to know whether the gentleman charges any fraud upon this part of the hiſtory; perhaps he may be of opinion by and by, that there was a ſleight of hand in the crucifixion, and that Chriſt only counterfeited death.

Mr. *A.* No, no; have no ſuch fears; he was not crucified by his diſciples, but by the *Romans* and the *Jews;* and they were in very good earneſt. I will prove beyond contradiction, that the dead body was fairly laid in the tomb, and the tomb ſealed up: and it will be well for you, if you can get it as fairly out again.

Judge. Go on with your evidence.

Mr. *A.* My Lord, the crucifixion being over the dead body was conveyed to a ſepulchre; and, in the general opinion, there ſeemed to be an end of the whole deſign. But the governors

vernors of the *Jews*, watchful for the ſafety of the people, called to mind, that Jeſus in his life-time had ſaid that he would riſe again on the third day. It may at firſt ſight ſeem ſtrange, that they ſhould give any attention to ſuch a prophecy: a prophecy big with confidence and preſumption, and which, to the common ſenſe of mankind, carried its confutation along with it. And "there is no other nation in the world, "which would not have ſlighed ſuch a vain "prognoſtication of a known impoſtor." But they had warning to be watchful. It was not long before that the people "had like to have "been fatally deluded, and impoſed on by him, "in the pretended reſuſcitation of *Lazarus*." They had fully diſcovered the cheat in the caſe of *Lazarus*, and had narrowly eſcaped the dangerous conſequences of it. And though Jeſus was dead, yet he had many Diſciples and followers alive, who were ready enough to combine in any fraud to verify the prediction of their Maſter. Should they ſucceed, the rulers foreſaw the conſequences in this caſe would be more fatal, than thoſe which before they had narrowly eſcaped. Upon this account they addreſſed themſelves to the *Roman* governor; told him how

how the caſe was; and deſired that he would grant them a guard to watch the ſepulchre; that the ſervice would not be long, for the prediction limited the Reſurrection to the third day; and when that was over, the ſoldiers might be releaſed from the duty. *Pilate* granted the requeſt; and a guard was ſet to watch the ſepulchre.

This was not all. The chief prieſts took another method to prevent all frauds, and it was the beſt that could poſſibly be taken; which was to ſeal up the door of the ſepulchre. To underſtand to what purpoſe this caution was uſed, you need only conſider what is intended by ſealing up doors, and boxes, or writings. Is it not for the ſatisfaction of all parties concerned, that they may be ſure things are in the ſtate they left them, when they come and find their ſeals not injured? This was the method uſed by *Darius*, when *Daniel* was caſt into the lions' den; he ſealed the door of the den. And for what purpoſe? Was is not to ſatisfy himſelf and his court, that no art had been uſed to preſerve *Daniel*? And when he came, and ſaw *Daniel* ſafe, and his own ſeal untouched, he was ſatisfied. And indeed if we conſider the thing rightly,

rightly, a ſeal thus uſed imports a covenant: if you deliver writings to a perſon ſealed, and he accepts them ſo, your delivery and his acceptance, implies a covenant between you, that the writings ſhall be delivered, and the ſeal whole. And ſhould the ſeal be broken, it would be a manifeſt fraud and breach of truſt. Nay, ſo ſtrongly is this covenant implied, that there needs no ſpecial agreement in the caſe. It is a compact which men are put under by the law of nations, and the common conſent of mankind. When you ſend a letter ſealed to the poſt-houſe you have not indeed a ſpecial agreement with all perſons through whoſe hands it paſſes, that it ſhall not be opened by any hand, but his only to whom it is directed; yet men know themſelves to be under this reſtraint, and that it is unlawful and diſhonourable to tranſgreſs it.

Since then the ſepulchre was ſealed; ſince the ſeal imported a covenant, conſider who were the parties to this covenant. They could be no other than the chief Prieſts on one ſide, the Apoſtles on the other. To prove this, no ſpecial agreement need be ſhewn. On one ſide, there was a concern to ſee the prediction fulfilled; on the other, to prevent fraud in fulfilling

ing it. The ſum of their agreement was naturally this: that the ſeals ſhould be opened at the time appointed for the Reſurrection, that all parties might ſee and be ſatisfied, whether the dead body was come to life, or no.

What now would any reaſonable man expect from theſe circumſtances? Do not you expect to hear that the chief Prieſts and the Apoſtles met at the time appointed, opened the ſeals, and that the matter in diſpute was ſettled beyond all controverſy one way or other? But ſee how it happened. The ſeals were broken, the body ſtolen away in the night by the Diſciples; none of the chief Prieſts preſent, or ſummoned to ſee the ſeals opened. The guards, when examined, were forced to confeſs the truth; though joined with an acknowledgment of their guilt, which made them liable to be puniſhed by *Pilate*; they confeſſed that they were aſleep, and in the mean time that the body was ſtolen away by the diſciples.

This evidence of the *Roman* ſoldiers, and the far ſtronger evidence ariſing from the clandeſtine manner of breaking up the ſeals, are ſufficient proofs of fraud.

But

But there is another circumſtance in the caſe of equal weight. Though the ſeals did not prevent the cheat entirely, yet they effectually falſified the prediction. According to the prediction, Jeſus was to riſe on the third day, or after the third day. At this time the chief Prieſts intended to be preſent, and probably would have been attended by a great multitude. This made it impoſſible to play any tricks at that time, and therefore the Apoſtles were forced to haſten the plot; and accordingly the Reſurrection happened a day before its time. For the body was buried on the *Friday*, and was gone early in the morning on *Sunday*.

Theſe are plain facts; facts drawn from the accounts given us by thoſe who are friends to the belief of the Reſurrection. The Gentleman will not call theſe imaginations, or complain that I have given him ſchemes inſtead of evidence.

Mr. *B.* My Lord, I am now to conſider that part of the argument upon which the Gentleman lays the greateſt ſtreſs. He has given us his evidence; mere evidence, he ſays, unmixed and clear of all ſchemes and imaginations. In one thing indeed he has been as good as his word;

word; he has proved beyond contradiction, that Chriſt died, and was laid in the ſepulchre; for without doubt when the *Jews* ſealed the ſtone, they took care to ſee that the body was there; otherwiſe their precaution was uſeleſs. He has proved too, that the prediction of Chriſt concerning his own Reſurrection, was a thing publicly known in all *Jeruſalem*; for he owns that this gave occaſion for all the care that was taken to prevent fraud. If this open prediction implies a fraudulent deſign, the evidence is ſtrong with the Gentleman; but if it ſhall appear to be what it really was, the greateſt mark that could be given of ſincerity and plain dealing in the whole affair, the evidence will be ſtill as ſtrong, but the weight of it will fall on the wrong ſide for the Gentleman's purpoſe.

In the next place, the Gentleman ſeems to be at a great loſs to account for the credit which the chief Prieſts gave to the prediction of the Reſurrection, by the care they took to prevent it. He thinks the thing in itſelf was too extravagant and abſurd to deſerve any regard; and that no one would have regarded ſuch a prediction in any other time or place. I agree with the Gentleman entirely: but then I demand of him

I am a reaſon why the chief Prieſts were under any concern about this prediction: Was it becauſe they had plainly diſcovered him to be a cheat and an impoſtor? It is impoſſible. This reaſon would have convinced them of the folly and preſumption of the prediction. It muſt therefore neceſſarily be, that they had diſcovered ſomething in the life and actions of Chriſt, which raiſed this jealouſy, and made them liſten to a prophecy in his caſe, which in any other caſe they would have deſpiſed. And what could this be but the ſecret conviction they were under by his many miracles of his extraordinary powers? This care therefore of the chief Prieſts over his dead, helpleſs body, is a laſting teſtimony of the mighty works which Jeſus did in his life-time. For had the *Jews* been perſuaded that he performed no wonders in his life, I think they would not have been afraid of ſeeing any done by him after his death.

But the Gentleman is of another mind. He ſays they had diſcovered a plain cheat in the caſe of *Lazarus*, whom Chriſt had pretended to raiſe from the dead; and therefore they took all this care to guard againſt a like cheat.

I begin now to want evidence; I am forbid to call this imagination; what elſe to call it I know not. There is not the leaſt intimation given from hiſtory, that there was any cheat in the caſe of *Lazarus*, or that any one ſuſpected a cheat. *Lazarus* lived in the country after he was raiſed from the dead; and though his life was ſecretly and baſely ſought after, yet no body had the courage to call him to a trial of his part of the cheat. It may be ſaid perhaps the rulers were terrified. Very well: but they were not terrified when they had Chriſt in their poſſeſſion, when they brought him to a trial; why did they not then object this cheat to Chriſt? It would have been much to their purpoſe. Inſtead of that, they accuſe him of a deſign to pull down their temple, to deſtroy their law, and of blaſphemy; but not one word of any fraud in the caſe of *Lazarus*, or any other caſe.

But not to enter into the merits of this cauſe, which has in it too many circumſtances for your preſent conſideration; let us take the caſe to be as the Gentleman ſtates it, that the cheat, in the caſe of *Lazarus*, was detected. What conſequence is to be expected? In all other caſes, impoſtors,

impoſtors, once diſcovered, grow odious and contemptible, and quite incapable of doing further miſchief: ſo little are they regarded, that even when they tell the truth, they are neglected. Was it ſo in this caſe? No, ſays the Gentleman, the *Jews* were the more careful that Chriſt ſhould not cheat them in his own Reſurrection. Surely this is a moſt ſingular caſe: when the people thought him a prophet, the chief Prieſts ſought to kill him, and thought his death would put an end to his pretenſions: when they and the people had diſcovered him to be a cheat, then they thought him not ſafe, even when he was dead, but were afraid he ſhould prove a true Prophet, and, according to his own prediction, riſe again. A needleſs, a prepoſterous fear!

In the next place, the Gentleman tells us how proper the care was that the chief Prieſts took. I agree perfectly with him. Human policy could not invent a more proper method to guard againſt and prevent all fraud. They delivered the ſepulchre, with the dead body in it, to a company of *Roman* ſoldiers, who had orders from their officer to watch the ſepulchre. Their care went further ſtill, they ſealed the door of the ſepulchre.

Upon this occaſion, the Gentleman has explained the uſe of ſeals when applied to ſuch purpoſes. They imply, he ſays, a covenant that the things ſealed up ſhall remain in the condition they are, till the parties to the ſealing are agreed to open them. I ſee no reaſon to enter into the learning about ſeals: let it be as the Gentleman has opened it. What then?

Why then, it ſeems, the Apoſtles and chief Prieſts were in a covenant that there ſhould be no Reſurrection, at leaſt no opening of the door, till they meet together at an appointed time to view and unſeal the door.

Your Lordſhip and the Court will now conſider the probability of this ſuppoſition. When Chriſt was ſeized and carried to his trial, his Diſciples fled, and hid themſelves for fear of the *Jews*, out of a juſt apprehenſion that they ſhould, if apprehended, be ſacrificed with their Maſter. *Peter* indeed followed him, but his courage ſoon failed, and it is well known in what manner he denied him. After the death of Chriſt, his Diſciples were ſo far from being ready to engage for his Reſurrection, or to enter into terms and agreements for the manner in which it ſhould be done, that they themſelves did

did not believe it ever would be. They gave over all hopes and thoughts of it;' and far from entering into engagements with the chief Prieſts, their whole concern was to keep themſelves concealed from them. This is a well known caſe, and I will not trouble you with particular authorities to prove this truth. Can any man now in his right ſenſes, think that the Diſciples, under theſe circumſtances, entered into this covenant with the *Jews?* I believe the Gentleman does not think it, and for that reaſon ſays, that ſeals ſo uſed import a covenant without a ſpecial agreement. Be it ſo; and it muſt then be allowed, that the Apoſtles were no more concerned in theſe ſeals, than ever other man in the country, and no more anſwerable for them; for the covenant reached to every body as well as to them, ſince they were under no ſpecial contract.

But I beg pardon for ſpending your time unneceſſarily; when the ſimple, plain account of this matter, will beſt anſwer all theſe jealouſies and ſuſpicions. The *Jews*, it is plain, were exceedingly ſolicitous about this event. For this reaſon they obtained a guard from *Pilate*; and when they had, they were ſtill ſuſpicious

leſt their guards ſhould deceive them, and enter into combination againſt them. To ſecure this point, they ſealed the door, and required of the guards to deliver up the ſepulchre to them ſealed as it was. This is the natural and true account of the matter. Do but conſider it in a parallel caſe; ſuppoſe a prince ſhould ſet a guard at the door of his treaſury; and the officer who placed the guard ſhould ſeal the door, and ſay to the ſoldiers, you ſhall be anſwerable for the ſeal if I find it broken: would not all the world underſtand the ſeal to be fixed to guard againſt the ſoldiers, who might, though employed to keep off others, be ready enough to pilfer themſelves? This is in all ſuch caſes but a neceſſary care; you may place guards, and when you do, all is in their power; *Et quis cuſtodes cuſtodiat ipſos?*

But it ſeems, that notwithſtanding all this care, the ſeals were broken, and the body gone: if you complain of this, Sir, demand ſatisfaction of your Guards, they only are reſponſible for it. The Diſciples had no more to do in it, than you or I.

The guards, the Gentleman ſays, have confeſſed the truth, and owned that they were aſleep,

aſleep, and that the Diſciples in the mean time ſtole away the body. I wiſh the guards were in Court, I would aſk them, how they came to be ſo punctual in relating what happened when they were aſleep; what induced them to believe that the body was ſtolen at all; what, that it was ſtolen by the Diſciples; ſince by their own confeſſion they were aſleep, and ſaw nothing, ſaw no body. But ſince they are not to be had, I would deſire to aſk the Gentleman the ſame queſtions; and whether he has any authorities in point, to ſhew that ever any man was admitted as an evidence in any Court, to prove a fact which happened when he was aſleep. I ſee the Gentleman is uneaſy; I will preſs the matter no further.

As this ſtory has no evidence to ſupport it, ſo neither has it any probability. The Gentleman has given you the character of the Diſciples, that they were weak, ignorant men, full of the popular prejudices and ſuperſtitions of their country: which ſtuck cloſe to them, notwithſtanding their long acquaintance with their Maſter. The Apoſtles are not much wronged in this account. And is it likely that ſuch men ſhould engage in ſo deſperate a deſign as to

ſteal away the body in oppoſition to the combined power of the *Jews* and *Romans?* What could tempt them to it? What good could the dead body do them? or if it could have done them any, what hope had they to ſucceed in their attempt? A dead body is not to be removed by ſleight of hand; it requires many hands to move it. Beſides, the great ſtone at the mouth of the ſepulchre was to be removed; which could not be done ſilently, or by men walking on tip-toes to prevent diſcovery; ſo that if the guards had really been aſleep, yet there was no encouragement to go on this enterprize. For it is hardly poſſible to ſuppoſe, but that rolling away the ſtone, moving the body, the hurry and confuſion in carrying it off, muſt awaken them.

But ſuppoſing the thing practicable, yet the attempt was ſuch as the Diſciples conſiſtently with their own notions could not undertake. The Gentleman ſays, they continued all their Maſter's life-time to expect to ſee him a temporal Prince; and a friend of the Gentleman's * has obſerved, what is equally true, that they had

* *Grounds*, page 33.

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the ſame expectation after his death. Conſider now their caſe. Their Maſter was dead; and they are to contrive to ſteal away his body. For what? Did they expect to make a King of the dead body, if they could get it into their power? Or did they think, if they had it, they could raiſe it to life again? If they truſted ſo far to their Maſter's prediction, as to expect his Reſurrection, (which I think is evident they did not) could they yet think the Reſurrection depended on their having the dead body? It is in all views abſurd. But the Gentleman ſuppoſes, that they meant to carry on the deſign for themſelves in their Maſter's name, if they could but have perſuaded the people to believe him riſen from the dead. But he does not conſider, that by this ſuppoſition he ſtrips the Diſciples of every part of their character at once, and preſents to us a new ſet of men in every reſpect different from the former. The former Diſciples were plain, weak men; but theſe are bold, hardy, cunning, and contriving. The former were full of the ſuperſtition of their country, and expected a Prince from the authority of their prophets: but theſe are deſpiſers of the

prophets, and of the notions of their countrymen, and are deſigning to turn theſe fables to their own advantage: for it cannot be ſuppoſed that they believed the prophets, and at the ſame time thought to accompliſh, or defeat them, by ſo manifeſt a cheat, to which they themſelves, at leaſt, were conſcious.

But let us take leave of theſe ſuppoſitions, and ſee how true the evidence in this caſe ſtands. Guards were placed, and they did their duty. But what are guards and centinels againſt the power of God! An Angel of the Lord opened the ſepulchre, the guards ſaw him, and became like dead men. This account they gave to the chief Prieſts; who ſtill perſiſting in their obſtinacy, bribed the guards to tell the contradictory ſtory, of their being aſleep, and the body ſtolen.

I cannot but obſerve to your Lordſhip, that all theſe circumſtances, ſo much queſtioned and ſuſpected, were neceſſary circumſtances, ſuppoſing the Reſurrection to be true. The ſeal was broken, the body came out of the ſepulchre, the guards were placed in vain to prevent it. Be it ſo: I deſire to know whether the Gentleman thinks that the ſeal put God under covenant;

nant; or could preſcribe to him a method of performing this great work? Or whether he thinks the guards were placed to maintain the ſeal, in oppoſition to the power of God? If he will maintain neither of theſe points, then the opening of the ſeals, notwithſtanding the guard ſet upon them, will be an evidence, not of the fraud, but of the power of the Reſurrection; and the guards will have nothing to anſwer for, but only this, that they were not ſtronger than God. The ſeal was a proper check upon the guards; the *Jews* had no other meaning in it; they could not be ſo ſtupid, as to imagine that they could by this contrivance diſappoint the deſigns of Providence. And it is ſurpriſing to hear theſe circumſtances made uſe of to prove the Reſurrection to be a fraud, which yet could not but happen, ſuppoſing the Reſurrection to be true.

But there is another circumſtance ſtill, which the Gentleman reckons very material, and upon which, I find, great ſtreſs is laid. The Reſurrection happened, we are told, a day ſooner than the prediction imported. The reaſon aſſigned for it is, that the execution of the plot at the time appointed, was rendered impracticable,

becauſe the chief Prieſts, and probably great numbers of the people, were prepared to viſit the ſepulchre at that time; and therefore the Diſciples were under a neceſſity of haſtening their plot.

This obſervation is entirely inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition upon which the reaſoning ſtands. The Gentleman has all along ſuppoſed the Reſurrection to have been managed by fraud, and not by violence; and indeed violence, if there had been an opportunity of uſing it, would have been inſignificant. Beating the guards, and removing the dead body by force, would have deſtroyed all pretences to a Reſurrection. Now ſurely the guards, ſuppoſing them not to be enough in number to withſtand all violence, were at leaſt ſufficient to prevent, or to diſcover fraud. What occaſion then to haſten the plot for fear of numbers meeting at the tomb, ſince there were numbers always preſent ſufficient to diſcover any fraud; the only method that could be uſed in the caſe?

Suppoſe then that we could not give a ſatisfactory account of the way of reckoning the time from the Crucifixion to the Reſurrection; yet this we can ſay, that the Reſurrection happened

pened during the time that the guards had the ſepulchre in keeping; and it is impoſſible to imagine what opportunity this could give to fraud. Had the time been delayed, the guards removed, and then a Reſurrection pretended, it might with ſome colour of reaſon have been ſaid, Why did he not come within his time? Why did he chuſe to come after his time, when all witneſſes who had patiently expected the appointed hour, were withdrawn? But now what is to be objected? You think he came too ſoon. But were not your guards at the door when he came? Did they not ſee what happened? And what other ſatisfaction could you have had, ſuppoſing he had come a day later?

By ſaying of this, I do not mean to decline the Gentleman's objection, which is founded upon a miſtake of a way of ſpeaking, common to the *Jews* and other people; who, when they name any number of days and years, include the firſt and the laſt of the days or years to make up the ſum. Chriſt, alluding to his own Reſurrection, ſays, *in three days I will raiſe it up.* The Angels report his prediction thus, *The Son of man ſhall be crucified, and the third day riſe again.*

He might as well have attempted alone, or with the help of *Barnabas* and *Silas*, of *Timotheus* and *Titus*, to have erected a monarchy upon the ruins of all the ſeveral ſtates then in the world, as to have erected Chriſtianity upon the deſtruction of all the ſeveral ſects of philoſophy which reigned in the minds of the *Gentiles*, among whom he preached, particularly the *Greeks* and the *Romans*.

Having thus proved (as I think) that in the work of converting the *Gentiles*, St. *Paul* could have no aſſiſtance, but was ſure on the contrary of the utmoſt repugnance and oppoſition to it imaginable, from the magiſtrates, from the prieſts, from the people, and from the philoſophers; it neceſſarily follows, that to ſucceed in that work he muſt have called in ſome extraordinary aid, ſome ſtronger power than that of reaſon and argument. Accordingly we find, he tells the *Corinthians*, *that his ſpeech and preaching was not with enticing words of man's wiſdom, but in demonſtration of the ſpirit and of power.* 1 Cor. ii. 4. And to the *Theſſalonians*, he ſays, *Our Goſpel came not unto you in word only, but alſo in power and in the Holy Ghoſt.* 1 Theſſ. i. 5. It was to the efficacy of the Divine power that he

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aſcribed all his ſucceſs in thoſe countries, and wherever elſe he planted the Goſpel of *Chriſt*. If that power really went with him, it would enable him to overcome all thoſe difficulties that obſtructed his enterprize, but *then he was not an impoſtor:* our inquiry therefore muſt be, whether (ſuppoſing him to have been an impoſtor) he could by *pretending to miracles*, have overcome all thoſe difficulties, and carried on his work with ſucceſs.

Now to give miracles, falſely pretended to, any reputation, two circumſtances are principally neceſſary, *an apt diſpoſition* in thoſe whom they deſigned to impoſe upon, and a *powerful confederacy* to carry on, and abet the cheat. Both theſe circumſtances, or at leaſt one of them, have always accompanied all the falſe miracles, ancient and modern, which have obtained any credit among mankind. To both theſe was owing the general faith of the heathen world in oracles, auſpices, auguries, and other impoſtures, by which the prieſts, combined with the magiſtrates, ſupported the national worſhip and deluded a people prepoſſeſſed in their favour, and willing to be deceived. Both the ſame

guards were hired to tell this lie by the chief Prieſts, it will appear from the after-conduct of the chief Prieſts themſelves, that they were conſcious that the ſtory was falſe. Not long after the Reſurrection of Chriſt, the Diſciples having received new power from above, appeared publicly in *Jeruſalem*, and in the very Temple, and teſtified the Reſurrection of Chriſt, even before thoſe who had murdered him. What now do the chief Prieſts do? They ſeize upon the Apoſtles, they threaten them, they beat them, they ſcourge them, and all to ſtop their mouths, inſiſting that they ſhould ſay no more of the matter. But why did they not, when they had the diſciples in their power, charge them directly with their notorious cheat in ſtealing the body, and expoſe them to the people as impoſtors? This had been much more to their purpoſe, than all their menaces and ill uſage, and would more effectually have undeceived the people. But of this not one word is ſaid. They try to murder them, enter into combinations to aſſaſſinate them, prevail with *Herod* to put one of them to death; but not ſo much as a charge againſt them of any fraud in the Reſurrection. Their orator *Tertullus*, who could not have miſſed

miſſed ſo fine a topic of declamation, had there been but a ſuſpicion to ſupport it, is quite ſilent on this head, and is content to flouriſh on the common-place of ſedition and hereſy, profaning the Temple, and the like; very trifles to his cauſe, in compariſon to the other accuſation, had there been any ground to make uſe of it. And yet as it happens, we are ſure the very queſtion of the Reſurrection came under debate; for *Feſtus* tells King *Agrippa*, that the *Jews* had certain queſtions againſt *Paul*, *of one Jeſus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.* After this, *Agrippa* hears *Paul* himſelf; and had he ſuſpected, much leſs had he been convinced that there was a cheat in the Reſurrection, he would hardly have ſaid to *Paul* at the end of the conference, *almoſt thou perſuadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.*

But let us ſee what the *Council* and *Senate* of the children of *Iſrael* thought of this matter, in the moſt ſolemn and ſerious deliberation they ever had about it. * Not long after the Reſurrection, the Apoſtles were taken; the high Prieſt thought the matter of that weight, that

* Acts v.

he ſummoned the Council and Senate of the children of *Iſrael*. The Apoſtles are brought before them, and make their defence. Part of their defence is in theſe words; *The God of our fathers raised up Jeſus, whom ye ſlew and hanged on a tree.* The defence was indeed a heavy charge upon the ſenate, and in the warmth of their anger, their firſt reſolution was to ſlay them all. But *Gamaliel*, one of the Council, ſtood up, and told them, that the matter deſerved more conſideration. He recounted to them the hiſtory of ſeveral impoſtors who had periſhed, and concluded with reſpect to the caſe of the apoſtles then before them; *If this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, leſt haply ye be found to fight againſt God.* The Council agreed to this advice, and after ſome ill treatment, the Apoſtles were diſcharged. I aſk now, and let any man of common ſenſe anſwer; could *Gamaliel* poſſibly have given this advice, and ſuppoſed that the hand of God might be with the Apoſtles, if he had known that there was a cheat diſcovered in the Reſurrection of Jeſus? Could the whole Senate have followed this advice, had they believed the diſcovery of the cheat? Was

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there not among them one man wiſe enough to ſay, how can you ſuppoſe God to have any thing to do in this affair, when the Reſurrection of Jeſus, upon which all depends, was a notorious cheat, and manifeſtly proved to be ſo? I ſhould but leſſen the weight of this authority by ſaying more, and therefore I will reſt here, and give way to the Gentleman to go on with his accuſation.

Mr. *A.* My Lord, before I proceed any further, I beg leave to ſay a few words in reply to what the Gentleman has offered on this head. The Gentleman thinks that the detection in the caſe of *Lazarus* ought to have made the *Jews* quite unconcerned in the caſe of *Jeſus*, and ſecure as to the event of his own Reſurrection. He ſays very true, ſuppoſing their care had been for themſelves; but governors have another care upon their hands, the care of their people; and it is not enough for them to guard againſt being impoſed on themſelves, they muſt be watchful to guard the multitude againſt frauds and deceits. The chief Prieſts were ſatisfied in deed of the fraud in the caſe of *Lazarus*, yet they ſaw the people deceived by it; and for this reaſon, and not for their own ſatisfaction, they

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uſed the caution in the caſe of the Reſurrection of Jeſus, which I before laid before you. In ſo doing, they are well juſtified; and the inconſiſtency charged on the other ſide, between their opinion of Jeſus, and their fear of being impoſed on by his pretended Reſurrection, is fully anſwered.

The next obſervation relates to the ſeal of the ſepulchre. The Gentleman thinks the ſeal was uſed as a check upon the *Roman* ſoldiers. But what reaſon had the *Jews* to ſuſpect them? They were not Diſciples of Jeſus; they were ſervants of the *Roman* Governor, and employed in the ſervice of the *Jews:* and I leave it to the Court to judge, whether the *Jews* ſet the ſeal to guard againſt their friends, or their enemies. But if the ſeals were really uſed againſt the guards, then the breaking of the ſeals is a proof that the guards were corrupted: and if ſo, it is eaſy to conceive how the body was removed.

As to the Diſciples, the Gentleman obſerves, that the part allotted them in the management of the Reſurrection ſuppoſes an unaccountable change in their character. It will not be long before the Gentleman will have occaſion for as great a change in their character; for theſe

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weak men you will find ſoon employed in converting the world, aud ſent to appear before Kings and Princes in the name of their Maſter; ſoon you will ſee them grow wiſe and powerful, and every way qualified for their extenſive and important buſineſs. The only difference between me and the Gentleman on the other ſide will be found to be this, that I date this charge a little earlier than he does, a ſmall matter ſurely, to determine the right of this controverſy.

The laſt obſervation relates to King *Agrippa's* complaiſance to *Paul*, and *Gamaliel's* advice. I cannot anſwer for *Agrippa's* meaning, but certainly he meant but little; and if this matter is to be tried by his opinion, we know that he never did turn Chriſtian. As for *Gamaliel*, it is probable that he ſaw great numbers of the people engaged zealouſly in favour of the Apoſtles, and might think it prudent to paſs the matter over in ſilence, and not to come to extremities. This is a common caſe in all governments; the multitude and their leaders often eſcape puniſhment, not becauſe they do not deſerve it, but becauſe it is not, in ſome circumſtances, prudent to exact it.

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I paſs over theſe things lightly, becauſe the next article contains the great, to us indeed, who live at this diſtance, the only great queſtion; for whatever reaſon the *Jews* had to believe the Reſurrection, it is nothing to us, unleſs the ſtory has been conveyed to us upon ſuch evidence as is ſufficient to ſupport the weight laid on it.

My Lord, we are now to enter upon the laſt and main article of this caſe; the nature of the evidence upon which the credit of the Reſurrection ſtands. Before I enquire into the qualifications of the particular witneſſes whoſe words we are deſired to take in this caſe; I would aſk, why this evidence, which manifeſtly relates to the moſt eſſential point of Chriſtianity, was not put beyond all exception? Many of the miracles of Chriſt are ſaid to be done in the ſtreets, nay even the temple, under the obſervation of all the world; but the like is not ſo much as pretended as to this; nay, we have it upon the confeſſion of *Peter*, the ringleader of the Apoſtles, that Chriſt appeared *not to all the people, but unto witneſſes choſen before of God* *. Why

* Acts x. 41.

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picking and culling of witneſſes in this caſe more than in any other? Does it not import ſome ſuſpicion, raiſe ſome jealouſy, that this caſe would not bear the public light?

I would aſk more particularly, why did not Jeſus after his Reſurrection appear openly to the chief Prieſts and Rulers of the *Jews?* Since his commiſſion related to them in an eſpecial manner, why were not his credentials laid before them? The Reſurrection is acknowledged to be the chief proof of his miſſion, why then was it concealed from thoſe who were more than all others concerned in the event of his miſſion? Suppoſe an ambaſſador from ſome foreign Prince ſhould come into *England*, make his public entry through the city, pay and receive viſits, and at laſt refuſe to ſhew any letters of credence, or to wait on the King, what would you think of him? Whatever you would think in that caſe, you muſt think in this, for there is no difference between them.

But we muſt take the evidence as it is; it was thought proper in this caſe, to have ſelect, choſen witneſſes; and we muſt now conſider who they were, and what reaſon we have to take their word.

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The firſt witneſs was an Angel or Angels; they appeared like men to ſome women who went early to the ſepulchre. If they appeared like men, upon what ground are we to take them for Angels? The women ſaw men, therefore they can witneſs only to the ſeeing of men: but I ſuppoſe it is the women's judgment, and not their evidence that they are to follow in this caſe. Here then we have a ſtory of one apparition to ſupport the credit of another apparition; and the firſt apparition hath not ſo much as the evidence of the women to ſupport it, but is grounded on their ſuperſtition, ignorance, and fear. Every country can afford an hundred inſtances of this kind; and there is this common to them all, that as learning and common ſenſe prevail in any country, they die away and are no more heard of.

The next witneſſes are the women themſelves; the wiſeſt men can hardly guard themſelves againſt the fears of ſuperſtition; poor fully women therefore in this caſe muſt needs be unexceptionable witneſſes; and fit to be admitted into the number of the choſen witneſſes to atteſt this fact. One part of the account given of them is very rational, that they were ſurpriſed

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and frightened beyond meaſure; and I leave it to your Lordſhip and the Court to judge, how well qualified they were to give a juſt relation of what paſſed.

After this, Jeſus appears to two of his Diſciples as they were upon a journey; he joins them, and introduces a diſcourſe about himſelf; and ſpent much time, till it began to grow dark, in expounding the prophecies relating to the death and Reſurrection of the Meſſias. All this while the Diſciples knew him not. But then going into an houſe to lodge together, at ſupper he broke bread, and gave it to them; immediately they knew him, immediately he vaniſhed. Here then are two witneſſes more: but what will you call them? Eye-witneſſes? Why their eyes were open, and they had their ſenſes when he reaſoned with them and they knew him not. So far therefore they are witneſſes that it was not he. Tell us therefore upon what account you reject the evidence of their ſenſe before the breaking of the bread, and inſiſt on it afterwards? And why did Jeſus vaniſh as ſoon as known; which has more of the air of an apparition, than of the appearance of a real man reſtored to life?

Cleopas, who was one of theſe two Diſciples, finds out the Apoſtles, to make the report of what had paſſed to them. No ſooner was the ſtory told, but Jeſus appears among them. They were all frightened and confounded, and thought they ſaw a ſpectre. He rebukes them for infidelity, and their ſlowneſs in believing the prophecies of his Reſurrection: and though he refuſed before to let the woman touch him, (a circumſtance which I ought not to have omitted;) yet now he invites the Apoſtles to handle him, to examine his hands and feet, and ſearch the wounds of the croſs. But what body was it they examined? The ſame that came in when the doors were ſhut; the ſame that vaniſhed from the two diſciples; the ſame that the women might not touch: in a word, a body quite different from a human body, which we know cannot paſs through walls, or appear or diſappear at pleaſure. What then could their hands or eyes inform them of in this caſe? Beſides; is it credible that God ſhould raiſe a body imperfectly, with the very wounds in it of which it died? Or if the wounds were ſuch as deſtroyed the body before, how could a natural body ſubſiſt with them afterwards?

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There are more appearances of Jeſus recorded, but ſo much of the ſame kind, ſo liable to the ſame difficulties and objections, that I will not trouble your Lordſhip and the Court with a diſtinct enumeration of them. If the Gentleman on the other ſide finds any advantage in any of them more than in theſe mentioned, I ſhall have an opportunity to conſider them in my reply.

It may ſeem ſurpriſing to you, perhaps, that a matter of this moment was truſted upon ſuch evidence as this: but it will be ſtill more ſurpriſing to conſider that the ſeveral nations who received the Goſpel, and ſubmitted to the faith of this article, had not even this evidence: for what people or nation had the evidence of the Angels, the women, or even of all the Apoſtles? So far from it, that every country had its ſingle Apoſtle, and received the faith upon the credit of his ſingle evidence. We have followed our anceſtors without enquiry; and if you examine the thing to the bottom, our belief was originally built upon the word of one man.

I ſhall trouble you, Sir, but with one obſervation more, which is this: that although in common life we act in a thouſand inſtances upon

the faith and credit of human teſtimony; yet the reaſon for ſo doing is not the ſame in the caſe before us. In common affairs, where nothing is aſſerted but what is probable, and poſſible, and according to the uſual courſe of nature, a reaſonable degree of evidence ought to determine every man. For the very probability, or poſſibility of the thing, is a ſupport to the evidence; and in ſuch caſes we have no doubt but a man's ſenſes qualify him to be a witneſs. But when the thing teſtified is contrary to the order of nature, and, at firſt ſight at leaſt, impoſſible, what evidence can be ſufficient to overturn the conſtant evidence of nature, which ſhe gives us in the conſtant and regular method of her operations? If a man tells me he has been in *France*, I ought to give a reaſon for not believing him; but if he tells me he comes from the grave, what reaſon can he give why I ſhould believe him? In the caſe before us, ſince the body raiſed from the grave differed from common natural bodies, as we have before ſeen; how can I be aſſured that the Apoſtles' ſenſes qualified them to judge at all of this body, whether it was the ſame, or not the ſame which was buried? They handled the body, which yet could paſs through doors

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and walls; they ſaw it, and ſometimes knew it, at other times knew it not. In a word, it ſeems to be a caſe exempt from human evidence. Men have limited ſenſes, and a limited reaſon; when they act within their limits, we may give credit to them; but when they talk of things removed beyond the reach of their ſenſes and reaſon, we muſt quit our own, if we believe theirs.

Mr. *B.* My Lord, in anſwering the objections under this head, I ſhall find myſelf obliged to change the order in which the Gentleman thought proper to place them. He began with complaining, that Chriſt did not appear publicly to the *Jews* after his Reſurrection, and eſpecially to the chief Prieſts and Rulers; and ſeemed to argue, as if ſuch evidence would have put the matter in queſtion out of all doubt; but he concluded with an obſervation, to prove that no evidence in this caſe can be ſufficient; that a Reſurrection is a thing in nature impoſſible, at leaſt impoſſible to be proved to the ſatisfaction of a rational enquirer. If this be the caſe, why does he require more evidence, ſince none can be ſufficient? Or to what purpoſe is it to vindicate the particular evidence of the-

Reſurrection of Chriſt, ſo long as this general prejudice, that a Reſurrection is incapable of being proved, remains unremoved? I am under a neceſſity therefore to conſider this obſervation in the firſt place, that it may not lie as a dead weight upon all I have to offer in ſupport of the evidence of Chriſt's Reſurrection.

The Gentleman allows it to be reaſonable in many caſes to act upon the teſtimony and credit of others; but he thinks this ſhould be confined to ſuch caſes, where the thing teſtified is *probable, poſſible*, and *according to the uſual courſe of nature*. The Gentleman does not, I ſuppoſe, pretend to know the extent of all natural poſſibilities, much leſs will he ſuppoſe them to be generally known; and therefore his meaning muſt be, that the teſtimony of witneſſes is to be received only in caſes which appear to us to be poſſible. In any other ſenſe we can have no diſpute; for mere impoſſibilities which can never exiſt, can never be proved. Taking the obſervation therefore in this ſenſe, the propoſition is this: that the teſtimony of others ought not to be admitted, but in ſuch matters as appear probable, or at leaſt poſſible to our conceptions. For inſtance: a man who lives in a warm

warm climate, and never ſaw ice, ought upon no evidence to believe that rivers freeze and grow hard in cold countries: for this is improbable, contrary to the uſual courſe of nature; and impoſſible according to his notion of things. And yet we all know that this is a plain manifeſt caſe, diſcernible by the ſenſes of men, of which therefore they are qualified to be good witneſſes. An hundred ſuch inſtances might be named, but it is needleſs; for ſurely nothing is more apparently abſurd, than to make one man's ability in diſcerning, and his veracity in reporting plain facts, depend upon the ſkill or ignorance of the hearer. And what has the Gentleman ſaid, upon this occaſion, againſt the Reſurrection, more than any man, who never ſaw ice, might ſay againſt an hundred honeſt witneſſes, who aſſert that water turns to ice in cold climates?

It is very true, that men do not ſo eaſily believe upon teſtimony of others, things which to them ſeem improbable or impoſſible; but the reaſon is not, becauſe the thing itſelf admits of no evidence, but becauſe the hearer's preconceived opinion outweighs the credit of the reporter, and makes his veracity to be called

in queſtion. For inſtance: it is natural for a ſtone to roll down hill, it is unnatural for it to roll up hill; but a ſtone moving up hill is as much the object of ſenſe as a ſtone moving down hill; and all men in their ſenſes are as capable of ſeeing and judging, and reporting the fact in one caſe, as in the other. Should a man then tell you, that he ſaw a ſtone go up hill of its own accord, you might queſtion his veracity, but you could not ſay the thing admitted no evidence, becauſe it was contrary to the law and uſual courſe of nature: for the law of nature formed to yourſelf from your own experience and reaſoning, is quite independent of the matter of fact which the man teſtifies; and whenever you ſee facts yourſelf, which contradict your notions of the law of Nature, you admit the facts, becauſe you believe yourſelf; when you do not admit like facts upon the evidence of others, it is becauſe you do not believe them, and not becauſe the facts in their own nature exclude all evidence.

Suppoſe a man ſhould tell you that he was come from the dead: you would be apt to ſuſpect his evidence. But what would you ſuſpect? That he was not alive; when you heard him,

him, ſaw him, felt him, and converſed with him? You could not ſuſpect this, without giving up all your ſenſes, and acting in this caſe as you act in no other. Here then you would queſtion, whether the man had ever been dead. But would you ſay, that it is incapable of being made plain by human teſtimony, that this or that man died a year ago? It cannot be ſaid. Evidence in this caſe is admitted in all Courts perpetually.

Conſider it the other way. Suppoſe you ſaw a man publicly executed, his body afterwards wounded by the executioner, and carried and laid in the grave; that after this you ſhould be told, that the man was come to life again: what would you ſuſpect in this caſe? Not that the man had never been dead; for that you ſaw yourſelf: but you would ſuſpect whether he was now alive. But would you ſay, this caſe excluded all human teſtimony; and that men could not poſſibly diſcern, whether one with whom they converſed familiarly, was alive or no? Upon what ground could you ſay this? A man riſing from the grave is an object of ſenſe, and can give the ſame evidence of his being alive, as any other man in the world can give.

So that a Reſurrection conſidered only as a fact to be proved by evidence, is a plain caſe; it requires no greater ability in the witneſſes, than that they be able to diſtinguiſh between a man dead, and a man alive: a point, in which I believe every man living thinks himſelf a judge.

I do allow that this caſe, and others of like nature, require more evidence to give them credit than ordinary caſes do. You may therefore require more evidence in theſe, than in other caſes; but it is abſurd to ſay, that ſuch caſes admit no evidence, when the things in queſtion are manifeſtly objects of ſenſe.

I allow further, that the Gentleman has rightly ſtated the difficulty upon the foot of common prejudice; and that it ariſes from hence, that ſuch caſes appear to be contrary to the courſe of Nature. But I deſire him to conſider what the courſe of Nature is. Every man, from the loweſt countryman to the higheſt philoſopher, frames to himſelf from his experience and obſervation a notion of the courſe of Nature; and is ready to ſay of every thing reported of him that contradicts his experience, that it is contrary to Nature. But will the Gentleman ſay that every thing is impoſſible, or even improbable,

ble, that contradicts the notion which men frame to themſelves of the courſe of Nature? I think he will not ſay it. And if he will, he muſt ſay that water can never freeze, for it is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the notion which men have of the courſe of Nature, who live in the warm climates. And hence it appears, that when men talk of the courſe of Nature, they really talk of their own prejudices and imaginations, and that ſenſe and reaſon are not ſo much concerned in the caſe as the Gentleman imagines. For I aſk, is it from the evidence of ſenſe, or the evidence of reaſon, that people of warm climates think it contrary to Nature, that water ſhould grow ſolid and become ice? As for ſenſe, they ſee indeed that water with them is always liquid, but none of their ſenſes tell them that it can never grow ſolid; as for reaſon it can never ſo inform them, for right reaſon can never contradict the truth of things. Our ſenſes then inform us rightly what the uſual courſe of things is; but when we conclude that things cannot be otherwiſe, we outrun the information of our ſenſes, and the concluſion ſtands upon prejudice, and not upon reaſon. And yet ſuch concluſions form what is generally

called the courſe of Nature. And when men upon proper evidence and informations admit things contrary to this preſuppoſed courſe of Nature, they do not, as the Gentleman expreſſes it *quit their own ſenſe and reaſon*, but, in truth, they quit their own miſtakes and prejudices.

In the caſe before us the caſe of the Reſurrection; the great difficulty ariſes from the like prejudice: we all know by experience that all men die, and riſe no more. Therefore we conclude, that for a dead man to riſe to life again, is contrary to the courſe of Nature: and certainly it is contrary to the uniform and ſettled courſe of things. But if we argue from hence, that it is contrary and repugnant to the real laws of Nature, and abſolutely impoſſible on that account, we argue without any foundation to ſupport us either from our ſenſes or our reaſon. We cannot learn from our eyes, or feeling, or any other ſenſe, that it is impoſſible for a dead body to live again; if we learn it at all, it muſt be from our reaſon; and yet what one maxim of reaſon is contradicted by the ſuppoſition of a Reſurrection? For my own part, when I conſider how I live; that all the animal motions neceſſary

neceſſary to my life are independent of my will; that my heart beats without my conſent, and without my direction; that digeſtion and nutrition are performed by methods to which I am not conſcious; that my blood moves in a perpetual round; which is contrary to all known laws of motion; I cannot but think that the preſervation of my life, in every moment of it, is as great an act of power as is neceſſary to raiſe a dead man to life. And whoever ſo far reflects upon his own being, as to acknowledge that he owes it to a ſuperior Power, muſt needs think that the ſame power which gave life to ſenſeleſs matter at firſt, and ſet all the ſprings and movements a going at the beginning, can reſtore life to a dead body. For ſurely it is not a greater thing to give life to a body once dead, than to a body that never was alive.

In the next place muſt be conſidered the difficulties which the Gentleman has laid before you with regard to the nature of Chriſt's body after the Reſurrection. He has produced ſome paſſages which, he thinks, imply, that the body was not a real natural body, but a mere phantom, or apparition: and thence concludes, that there

there being no real object of ſenſe, there can be no evidence in the caſe.

Preſumptions are of no weight againſt poſitive evidence; and every account of the Reſurrection aſſures us, that the body of Chriſt was ſeen, felt, and handled by many perſons; who were called upon by Chriſt ſo to do, that they might be aſſured that he had fleſh and bones, and was not a mere ſpectre, as they, in their firſt ſurpriſe, imagined him to be. It is impoſſible that they, who give this account, ſhould mean by any thing that they report, to imply that he had no real body. It is certain then, that when the Gentleman makes uſe of what they ſay to this purpoſe, he uſes their ſayings contrary to their meaning. For it is not pretended that they ſay, that Chriſt had not a real human body after the Reſurrection; nor is it pretended they had any ſuch thought, except only upon the firſt ſurpriſe of ſeeing him, and before they had examined him with their eyes and hands. But ſomething they have ſaid, which the Gentleman, according to his notions of philoſophy, thinks, implies that the body was not real. To clear this point, therefore, I muſt lay before you

you the paſſages referred to, and conſider how juſtly the Gentleman reaſons from them.

The firſt paſſage relates to *Mary Magdalen*, who, the firſt time ſhe ſaw Chriſt, was going to embrace his feet, as the cuſtom of the country was: Chriſt ſays to her, * *Touch me not, for I am not yet aſcended to my Father; but go to my Brethren, and tell them, &c.* Hence the Gentleman concludes, that Chriſt's body was not ſuch a one as would bear the touch. But how does he infer this? Is it from theſe words, *Touch me not?* It cannot be: for thouſands ſay it every day, without giving the leaſt ſuſpicion that their bodies are not capable of being touched. The concluſion then muſt be built on thoſe other words, *For I am not yet aſcended to my Father.* But what have theſe words to do with the reality of his body? It might be real or not real, for any thing that is here ſaid. There is a difficulty in theſe words, and it may be hard to give the true ſenſe of them; but there is no difficulty in ſeeing that they have no relation to the nature of Chriſt's body; for of his body nothing is ſaid. The natural ſenſe of

* John xx. 17.

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the place, as I collect by comparing this paſſage with *Matt.* xxviii. 9. is this: *Mary Magdalen*, upon ſeeing Jeſus, fell at his feet, and laid hold of them, and held them as if ſhe meant never to let them go: Chriſt ſaid to her, "Touch me "not, or hang not about me now, you will have "other opportunities of ſeeing me, for I go not "yet to my Father; loſe no time then, but go "quickly with my meſſage to my Brethren." I am not concerned to ſupport this particular interpretation of the paſſage; it is ſufficient to my purpoſe, to ſhew that the words cannot poſſibly relate to the nature of Chriſt's body one way or other.

The next paſſage relates to Chriſt's joining two of his Diſciples upon the road, and converſing with them without being known by them: it grew dark, they preſſed him to ſtay with them that night; he went in with them, broke bread, and bleſſed it, and gave it them, and then they knew him; and immediately he diſappeared.

The circumſtance of diſappearing ſhall be conſidered under the next head, with other objections of the like kind: at preſent I ſhall only examine the other parts of this ſtory, and enquire

quire whether they afford any ground to conclude that the body of Chriſt was not a real one. Had this piece of hiſtory been related of any other perſon, I think no ſuch ſuſpicion could have ariſen: from what is there unnatural or uncommon in this account? Two men meet an acquaintance whom they thought dead; they converſe with him for ſome time without ſuſpecting who he was; the very perſuaſion they then were under that he was dead, contributed greatly to their not knowing him; beſides, he appeared in an habit and form different from what he uſed when he converſed with them; appeared to them on a journey, and walked with them ſide by ſide; in which ſituation no one of the company has a full view of another. Afterwards, when they were at ſupper together, and lights brought in, they plainly diſcerned who he was. Upon this occaſion, the Gentleman aſks what ſort of witneſſes theſe are; eye-witneſſes? No; before ſupper they were eye-witneſſes, ſays the Gentleman, that the perſon whom they ſaw was not Chriſt: and then he demands a reaſon for our rejecting the evidence of their ſenſe when they did not know Chriſt, and inſiſting on it when they did.

It is no uncommon thing for men to catch themſelves and others by ſuch notable acute queſtions, and to be led by the ſprightlineſs of their imagination out of the road of truth and common ſenſe. I beg leave to tell the Gentleman a ſhort ſtory, and then to aſk him his own queſtion. A certain Gentleman who had been ſome years abroad, happened in his return to *England* through *Paris* to meet his own ſiſter there. She not expecting to ſee him there, nor he to ſee her, they converſed together with other company, at a public houſe, for great part of a day, without knowing each other. At laſt the Lady began to ſhew great ſigns of diſorder; her colour came and went, and the eyes of the company were drawn towards her; and then ſhe cried out, Oh my brother! and was hardly held from fainting. Suppoſe now this Lady were to depoſe upon oath in a Court of Juſtice, that ſhe ſaw her brother at *Paris*; I would aſk the Gentleman, whether he would object to the evidence, and ſay that ſhe was as good an eye-witneſs that her brother was not there, as that he was; and demand of the Court, why they rejected the evidence of her ſenſes when ſhe did not know her brother, and were ready to believe

lieve it when ſhe did? When the queſtion is anſwered in this caſe, I deſire only to have the benefit of it in the caſe now before you. But if you ſhall be of opinion that there was ſome extraordinary power uſed on this occaſion, and incline to think that the expreſſion, (their eyes were holden) imports as much; then the caſe will fall under the next article. In which

We are to conſider Chriſt's vaniſhing out of ſight; his coming in and going out when the doors were ſhut; and ſuch like paſſages; which, as they fall under one conſideration, ſo I ſhall ſpeak to them together.

But it is neceſſary firſt to ſee what the Apoſtles affirmed diſtinctly in their accounts of theſe facts; for I think more has been ſaid for them, than ever they ſaid, or intended to ſay for themſelves. In one place * it is ſaid, *he vaniſhed out of their ſight.* Which tranſlation is corrected in the margin of our Bibles thus, *he ceaſed to be ſeen of them.* And the original † imports no more.

It is ſaid in another place, that the Diſciples being together, *and the doors ſhut*, Jeſus came

* Luke xxiv. 31. † ἄφαντος ἐγένετο.

and

and ſtood in the midſt of them. How he came is not ſaid: much leſs is it ſaid that he came through the door, or the key-hole; and for any thing that is ſaid to the contrary, he might come in at the door, though the Diſciples ſaw not the door open, nor him, till he was in the midſt of them. But the Gentleman thinks theſe paſſages prove that the Diſciples ſaw no real body, but an apparition. I am afraid that the Gentleman after all his contempt of apparitions, and the ſuperſtition on which they are founded, is fallen into the ſnare himſelf, and is arguing upon no better principles than the common notions which the vulgar have of apparitions. Why elſe does he imagine theſe paſſages to be inconſiſtent with the reality of Chriſt's body? Is there no way for a real body to diſappear? Try the experiment now; do but put out the candles, we ſhall all diſappear: if a man falls aſleep in the day-time, all things diſappear to him; his ſenſes are all locked up; and yet all things about him continue to be real, and his ſenſes continue perfect. As ſhutting out all rays of light would make all things diſappear; ſo intercepting the rays of light from any particular body would make that diſappear. Perhaps

haps ſomething like this was the caſe; or perhaps ſomething elſe, of which we know nothing. But be the caſe what it will, the Gentleman's concluſion is founded on no principle of true philoſophy: for it does not follow that a body is not real, becauſe I loſe ſight of it ſuddenly. I ſhall be told, perhaps, that this way of accounting for the paſſages, is as wonderful, and as much out of the common courſe of things, as the other. Perhaps it is ſo; and what then? Surely the Gentleman does not expect, that in order to prove the reality of the greateſt miracle that ever was, I ſhould ſhew that there was nothing miraculous in it, but that every thing happened according to the ordinary courſe of things? My only concern is to ſhew, that theſe paſſages do not infer that the body of Chriſt after the Reſurrection was no real body. I wonder the Gentleman did not carry his argument a little further, and prove that Chriſt, before his death, had no real body; for we read, that when the multitude would have thrown him down a precipice, he went through the midſt of them unſeen. Now nothing happened after his Reſurrection more unaccountable than this that happened before it; and if the argument be

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good at all, it will be good to prove that there never was ſuch a man as Jeſus in the world. Perhaps the Gentleman may think this a little too much to prove; and if he does, I hope he will quit the argument in one caſe, as well as in the other; for difference there is none.

Hitherto we have been called upon to prove the reality of Chriſt's body, and that it was the ſame after the Reſurrection that it was before; but the next objection complains, that the body was too much the ſame with that which was buried; for the Gentleman thinks that it had the ſame mortal wounds open and uncured, of which it died. His obſervation is grounded upon the words which Chriſt uſes to *Thomas*, *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thruſt it into my ſide**. Is it here affirmed that *Thomas* did actually put his hand into his ſide, or ſo much as ſee his wounds freſh and bleeding? Nothing like it. But it is ſuppoſed from the words of Chriſt; for if he had no wounds, he would not have invited *Thomas* to probe them. Now the meaning of Chriſt will beſt appear by an account of

* John xx. 27.

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the occaſion he had to uſe this ſpeech. He had appeared to his Diſciples, in the abſence of *Thomas*, and ſhewn them his hands and feet, which ſtill had the marks of his crucifixion: the Diſciples report this to *Thomas:* he thought the thing impoſſible, and expreſſed his unbelief, as men are apt to do when they are poſitive, in a very extravagant manner: you talk, ſays he, of the prints of the nails in his hands and feet; for my part, I will never believe this thing, *except I ſhall ſee in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thruſt my hand into his ſide.* Now in the firſt place, here is nothing ſaid of open wounds; *Thomas* talks only of putting his finger into the print, that is, the ſcar of the nails, and of thruſting his hand into his ſide. And in common ſpeech, to thruſt an hand into any one's ſide, does not ſignify to thruſt it through the ſide into the bowels. Upon this interpretation of the words, which is a plain and natural one, the Gentleman's objection is quite gone. But ſuppoſe *Thomas* to mean what the Gentleman means; in that caſe the words of Chriſt are manifeſtly a ſevere reproach to him for his infidelity: here ſays Chriſt, are my hands and my ſide; take

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the ſatisfaction you require, thruſt your fingers into my hands, your hand into my ſide; repeating to him his own words, and calling him to his own conditions; which, to a man beginning to ſee his extravagance, is of all rebukes the ſevereſt. Such forms of ſpeech are uſed on many occaſions, and are never underſtood to import that the thing propoſed is proper, or always practicable. When the *Grecian* women reproached their ſons with cowardice, and called to them as they were flying from the enemy, to come and hide themſelves once more, like children as they were, in their mothers' wombs; he would have been ridiculous who had aſked the queſtion, whether the women really thought that they could take their ſons into their wombs again?

I have now gone through the objections which were neceſſarily to be removed before I could ſtate the evidence in this caſe. I am ſenſible I have taken up too much of your time; but I have this to ſay in my excuſe; that objections built on popular notions and prejudices, are eaſily conveyed to the mind in few words; and ſo conveyed, make ſtrong impreſſions: but whoever anſwers the objections, muſt encounter all

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the notions to which they are allied, and to which they owe their ſtrength; and it is well if with many words he can find admittance.

I come now to conſider the evidence of which our belief of the Reſurrection ſtands. And here I am ſtopped again. A general exception is taken to the evidence, that it is imperfect, unfair; and a queſtion is aſked, why did not Chriſt appear publicly to all the people, eſpecially to the Magiſtrates? Why were ſome witneſſes culled and choſen out, and others excluded?

It may be ſufficient perhaps to ſay, that where there are witneſſes enough, no Judge, no Jury complains for want of more; and therefore, if the witneſſes we have are ſufficient, it is no objection that we have not others, and more. If three credible men atteſt a will, which are as many as the law requires, would any body aſk, Why all the town were not called to ſet their hands? But, why were theſe witneſſes culled and choſen out? Why? For this reaſon, that they might be good ones. Does not every wiſe man chuſe proper witneſſes to his deed and to his will? And does not a good choice of witneſſes give ſtrength to every deed? How comes

it to paſs then, that the very thing which ſhuts out all ſuſpicion in other caſes, ſhould in this caſe only, be of all others, the moſt ſuſpicious thing itſelf?

What reaſon there is to make any complaints on the behalf of the *Jews*, may be judged, in part, from what has already appeared. Chriſt ſuffered openly in their ſight; and they were ſo well appriſed of his prediction that he ſhould riſe again, that they ſet a guard on his ſepulchre; and from their guards they learnt the truth. Every ſoldier was to them a witneſs of the Reſurrection of their own chuſing. After this, they had not one Apoſtle, (which the Gentleman obſerves was the caſe of other people) but all the Apoſtles, and many other witneſſes with them, and in their power. The Apoſtles teſtified the Reſurrection to them; not only to the people, but to the Elders of *Iſrael* aſſembled in Senate: to ſupport their evidence, they were enabled to work, and did work miracles openly in the name of Chriſt. Theſe people therefore have the leaſt reaſon to complain; and had of all others the fulleſt evidence, and in ſome reſpects ſuch as none but themſelves could have, for they only were keepers of the ſepulchre. I believe, if the Gentleman was to chuſe an evi-

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dence to his own ſatisfaction in the like caſe, he would deſire no more than to keep the ſepulchre, with a ſufficient number of guards.

But the argument goes further. It is ſaid that Jeſus was ſent with a ſpecial commiſſion to the *Jews*, that he was their Meſſias; and as his Reſurrection was his main credential, he ought to have appeared publickly to the Rulers of the *Jews* after his Reſurrection: that in doing otherwiſe, he acted like an ambaſſador pretending authority from his Prince, but refuſing to ſhew his letters of credence.

I was afraid, when I ſuffered myſelf to be drawn into this argument, that I ſhould be led into matters fitter to be decided by men of another profeſſion, than by lawyers. But ſince there is no help now, I will lay before you what appears to me to be the natural and plain account of this matter; leaving it to others, who are better qualified, to give a fuller anſwer to the objection.

It appears to me, by the accounts we have of Jeſus, that he had two diſtinct offices: one, as the Meſſias particularly promiſed to the *Jews*; another, as he was to be the great High Prieſt of the world. With reſpect to the firſt office,

he is called * *the Apoſtle of the Hebrews*; the † *Miniſter of the Circumciſion*; and ſays himſelf, ‡ *I am not ſent, but unto the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael.* Accordingly when he ſent out his Apoſtles in his life-time to preach, he expreſsly forbids them to go to the *Gentiles* or *Samaritans*; but go, § ſays he, *to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael.* Chriſt continued in the diſcharge of this office during the time of his natural life, till he was finally rejected by the *Jews.* And it is obſervable, that the laſt time he ſpoke to the people according to St. *Matthew's* account, he ſolemnly took leave of them, and cloſed his commiſſion. He had been long among them publiſhing glad tidings; but when all his preaching, all his miracles, had proved to be vain, the laſt thing he did was to denounce the woes they had brought on themſelves. The 23d chapter of St. *Matthew* recites theſe woes; and at the end of them Chriſt takes this paſſionate leave of *Jeruſalem*: "*O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem,* "thou that killeſt the prophets, and ſtoneſt "them which are ſent unto thee; how often

* Heb. iii. 1.
† Rom. xv. 8.
‡ Matt. xx. 24.
§ Matt. x. 5, 6.

"would

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" would I have gathered thy children together,
" even as a hen gathereth her chickens under
" her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your
" houſe is left unto you deſolate. For I ſay
" unto you, ye ſhall not ſee me henceforth, till
" ye ſhall ſay, bleſſed is he that cometh in the
" name of the Lord." It is remarkable, that this paſſage, as recorded by St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke* twice over, is determined, by the circumſtances, to refer to the near approach of his own death, and the extreme hatred of the *Jews* to him: and therefore thoſe words, *Ye ſhall not ſee me henceforth*, are to be dated from the time of his death, and manifeſtly point out the end of his particular miſſion to them. From the making this declaration, as it ſtands in St. *Matthew*, his diſcourſes are to his Diſciples; and they chiefly relate to the miſerable and wretched condition of the *Jews*, which was now decreed, and ſoon to be accompliſhed. Let me now aſk, whether, in this ſtate of things, any farther credentials of Chriſt's commiſſion to the *Jews* could be demanded or expected? He was rejected, his commiſſion was determined, and with it the fate of the nation was determined alſo: what uſe then of more credentials? As

to appearing to them after his Reſurrection, he could not do it conſiſtently with his own prediction; *Ye ſhall ſee me no more, till ye ſhall ſay, bleſſed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* The *Jews* were not in this diſpoſition after the Reſurrection, nor are they in it yet.

The Reſurrection was the foundation of Chriſt's new commiſſion, which extended to all the world. Then it was he declared, that *all power was given unto him in heaven and in earth.* Then he gave a new commiſſion to his Diſciples, not reſtrained to the houſe of *Iſrael*, but to go and *teach all nations.* This prerogative the *Jews* had under this commiſſion, that the Goſpel was every where firſt offered to them; but in no other terms than it was offered to the reſt of the world. Since then this commiſſion, of which the Reſurrection was the foundation, extended to all the world alike; what ground is there to demand ſpecial and particular evidence to the *Jews?* The Emperor and the Senate of *Rome* were a much more conſiderable part of the world, than the chief Prieſts and the ſynagogue; why does not the Gentleman object then, that Chriſt did not ſhew himſelf to *Tiberius* and his Senate? And ſince all men have an

equal

equal right in this caſe, why may not the ſame demand be made for every country: nay, for every age? And then the Gentleman may bring the queſtion nearer home; and aſk, why Chriſt did not appear in *England* in King *George*'s reign? There is, to my apprehenſion, nothing more unreaſonable, than to neglect and deſpiſe plain and ſufficient evidence before us, and to ſit down to imagine what kind of evidence would have pleaſed us; and then to make the want of ſuch evidence an objection to the truth; which yet, if well conſidered, would be found to be well eſtabliſhed.

The obſervation I have made upon the Reſurrection of Chriſt, naturally leads to another; which will help to account for the nature of the evidence we have in this great point. As the Reſurrection was the opening a new commiſſion, in which all the world had an intereſt; ſo the concern naturally was, to have a proper evidence to eſtabliſh this truth, and which ſhould be of equal weight to all. This did not depend upon the ſatisfaction given to private perſons, whether they were Magiſtrates or not Magiſtrates; but upon the conviction of thoſe, whoſe office it was to be, to bear teſtimony to this truth in

the world. In this ſenſe the Apoſtles were choſen to be witneſſes of the Reſurrection, becauſe they were choſen to bear teſtimony to it in the world; and not becauſe they only were admitted to ſee Chriſt after his Reſurrection: for the fact is otherwiſe. The Goſpel indeed, concerned to ſhew the evidence on which the faith of the world was to reſt, is very particular in ſetting forth the ocular demonſtration which the Apoſtles had of the Reſurrection; and mentions others, who ſaw Chriſt after his Reſurrection, only accidentally, and as the thread of the hiſtory led to it. But yet it is certain, there were many others who had this ſatisfaction as well as the Apoſtles. St. *Luke* tells us, that when Chriſt appeared to the eleven Apoſtles, there were others with them *; who they were, or how many they were, he ſays not. But it appears in the *Acts*, when an Apoſtle was to be choſen in the room of *Judas*; and the chief qualification required was, that he ſhould be one capable of being a witneſs of the Reſurrection; that there were preſent an hundred and

* Luke xxiv. 33.

twenty

twenty ſo qualified.* And St. *Paul* ſays, that Chriſt after his riſing was ſeen by five hundred at once, many of whom were living when he appealed to their evidence. So that the Gentleman is miſtaken, when he imagines that a few only were choſen to ſee Chriſt after he came from the grave. The truth of the caſe is, that out of thoſe who ſaw him, ſome were choſen to bear teſtimony to the world, and for that reaſon had the fulleſt demonſtration of the truth, that they might be the better able to give ſatisfaction to others. And what was there in this conduct to complain of? What to raiſe any jealouſy or ſuſpicion?

As to the witneſſes themſelves; the firſt the Gentleman takes notice of, are the Angels and the women. The mention of Angels led naturally to apparitions: and the women were called poor ſilly women; and there is an end of their evidence. But to ſpeak ſeriouſly: will the Gentleman pretend to prove, that there are no intelligent beings between God and man; or that they are not Miniſters of God; or that they were improperly employed in this

* Acts i. *Compare verſes* 15, 21, 22 *together.*

great and wonderful work, the Reſurrection of Chriſt? Till ſome of theſe points are diſproved, we may be at reſt; for the Angels were miniſters, and not witneſſes of the Reſurrection. And it is not upon the credit of the poor ſilly women that we believe Angels were concerned, but upon the report of thoſe who wrote the Goſpels, who deliver it as a truth known to themſelves, and not merely as a report taken from the women.

But for the women, what ſhall I ſay? Silly as they were, I hope at leaſt they had eyes and ears, and could tell what they heard and ſaw. In this caſe they tell no more; they report that the body was not in the ſepulchre; but ſo far from reporting the Reſurrection, that they did not believe it, and were very anxious to find to what place the body was removed. Further, they were not employed. For, I think, the Gentleman in another part obſerves rightly, that they were not ſent to bear teſtimony to any people. But ſuppoſe them to be witneſſes; ſuppoſe them to be improper ones: yet the evidence of the men ſurely is not the worſe, becauſe ſome women happened to ſee the ſame thing which they ſaw. And if men only muſt be

be admitted, of them we have enough to eſtabliſh this truth.

I will not ſpend your time in enumerating theſe witneſſes, or in ſetting forth the demonſtration they had of the truth which they report. Theſe things are well known. If you queſtion their ſincerity, they lived miſerably, and died miſerably, for the ſake of this truth. And what greater evidence of ſincerity can man give or require? And what is ſtill more, they were not deceived in their expectation by being ill treated; for he who employed them, told them before-hand, that the world would hate them, and treat them with contempt and cruelty.

But leaving theſe weighty and well-known circumſtances to your own reflexion, I beg leave to lay before you another evidence, paſſed over in ſilence by the Gentleman on the other ſide. He took notice that a Reſurrection was ſo extraordinary a thing, that no human evidence could ſupport it. I am not ſure that he is not in the right. If twenty men were to come into *England* with ſuch a report from a diſtant country, perhaps they might not find twenty more here to believe their ſtory. And I rather think the Gentleman may be in the right, becauſe in

the preſent caſe I ſee clearly, that the credit of the Reſurrection of Chriſt was not truſted to mere human evidence. To what evidence it was truſted, we find by his own declaration: *The Spirit of Truth, which proceeded from the Father, he ſhall teſtify of me;* and *ye alſo* (ſpeaking to his Apoſtles) *ſhall bear witneſs, becauſe ye have been with me from the beginning**. And therefore though the Apoſtles had converſed with him forty days after his Reſurrection, and had received his commiſſion to go teach all nations, yet he expreſsly forbids them entering upon the work, till they ſhould receive powers from above †. And St. *Peter* explains the evidence of the Reſurrection in this manner. *We* (the Apoſtles) *are his witneſſes of theſe things, and ſo is alſo the Holy Ghoſt, whom God hath given to them who obey him* ‡.

Now, what where the powers received by the Apoſtles? Were they not the powers of wiſdom and courage, by which they were enabled to appear before Rulers and Princes in the name of Chriſt; the power of miracles, even of raiſing the dead to life, by which they convinced the

* John xv. 26, 27. † Acts i. 14. ‡ Acts v. 32.

world

world that God was with them in what they ſaid and did? With reſpect to this evidence, St. *John* ſays, *If we receive the witneſs of men, the witneſs of God is greater* *. Add to this, that the Apoſtles had a power to communicate theſe gifts to believers. Can you wonder that men believed the reality of thoſe powers of which they were partakers, and became conſcious to themſelves? With reſpect to theſe communicated powers, I ſuppoſe St. *John* ſpeaks, when he ſays, *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witneſs in himſelf* †. Appealing not to an inward teſtimony of the Spirit, in the ſenſe of ſome modern Enthuſiaſts, but to the powers of the Spirit, which believers received, and which were ſeen in the effects that followed.

It was objected that the Apoſtles ſeparated themſelves to the work of the miniſtry, and one went into one country, another to another; and conſequently, that the belief of the Reſurrection was originally received every where upon the teſtimony of one witneſs. I will not examine this fact: ſuppoſe it to be ſo. But did this one witneſs go alone, when he was attended with the

* 1 John v. 9. † Ibid. ver. 10.

powers of heaven? Was not every blind man reſtored to ſight, and every lame man to his feet, a new witneſs to the truth reported by the firſt? Beſides, when the people of different countries came to compare notes, and found that they had all received the ſame account of Chriſt, and of his doctrine; then ſurely the evidence of theſe diſtant witneſſes thus united, became ſtronger than if they had told their ſtory together: for twelve men ſeparately examined, form a much ſtronger proof for the truth of any fact, than twelve men agreeing together in one ſtory.

If the ſame thing were to happen in our own time: if one or two were to come into *England*, and report that a man was raiſed from the dead; and in conſequence of it, teach nothing but that we ought to love God and our neighbours: if to confirm their report, they ſhould, before our eyes, cure the blind, the deaf, the lame, and even raiſe the dead to life; if endowed with all theſe powers, they ſhould live in poverty and diſtreſs, and patiently ſubmit to all that ſcorn, contempt, and malice could contrive to diſtreſs them; and at laſt ſacrifice even their lives in juſtification of the truth of their report: if upon

enquiry

enquiry we ſhould find that all the countries in *Europe* had received the ſame account, ſupported by the ſame miraculous powers, atteſted in like manner by the ſufferings, and confirmed by the blood of the witneſſes: I would fain know what any reaſonable man would do in this caſe? Would he deſpiſe ſuch evidence? I think he would not? and whoever thinks otherwiſe, muſt ſay, that a Reſurrection, though in its own nature poſſible, is yet ſuch a thing, in which we ought not to believe either God or man.

Judge. Have you done, Sir?

Mr. *B.* Yes, my Lord.

Judge. Go on Mr. *A.* if you have any thing to ſay in reply.

Mr. *A.* My Lord, I ſhall trouble you with very little. The objections and anſwers under this head, I ſhall leave to the judgment of the Court; and beg leave only to make an obſervation or two upon the laſt part of the Gentleman's argument.

And firſt, with reſpect to the ſufferings of the Apoſtles and Diſciples of Jeſus; and the argument drawn from thence for the truth of their doctrines and aſſertions; I beg leave to obſerve to you, that there is not a falſe religion or pre-

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tence in the world, but can produce the ſame authority, and ſhew many inſtances of men, who have ſuffered even to death for the truth of their ſeveral profeſſions. If we conſult only modern ſtory, we ſhall find Papiſts ſuffering for popery, Proteſtants for their religion; and among Proteſtants, every ſect has had its martyrs; Puritans, Quakers, Fifth-Monarchy Men. In *Henry* the Eighth's time, *England* ſaw both Popiſh and Proteſtant Martyrs; in Queen *Mary's* reign the rage fell upon Proteſtants; in Queen *Elizabeth's*, Papiſts and Puritans were called ſometimes, though rarely, to this trial. In later times, ſometimes Churchmen, ſometimes Diſſenters, were perſecuted. What muſt we ſay then? All theſe ſufferers had not truth with them; and yet, if there be any weight in this argument from ſuffering, they have all a right to plead it.

But I may be told, perhaps, that men by their ſufferings, though they do not prove their doctrines to be true, yet prove at leaſt their own ſincerity: as if it were impoſſible for men to diſſemble at the point of death! Alas! how many inſtances are there of men's denying facts plainly proved, aſſerting facts plainly diſproved,

even

even with the rope about their necks? Muſt all ſuch paſs for innocent ſufferers, ſincere men? If not, it muſt be allowed, that a man's word at the point of death is not always to be relied on.

Another obſervation I would make, is with reſpect to the evidence of the Spirit, on which ſo much ſtreſs is laid. It has been hitherto inſiſted on, that the Reſurrection was a matter of fact, and ſuch a fact, as was capable and proper to be ſupported by the evidence of ſenſe. How comes it about, that this evidence, this which is the proper evidence, is given up as inſufficient, and a new improper evidence introduced? Is it not ſurpriſing, that one great miracle ſhould want an hundred more to prove it? Every miracle is itſelf an appeal to ſenſe, and therefore admits no evidence but that of ſenſe. And there is no connection between a miracle done this year and laſt year. It does not follow therefore, becauſe *Peter* cured a lame man (allowing the fact) that therefore Chriſt roſe from the dead.

But allowing the Gentleman all he demands, what is it to us? They who had the witneſs within them, did perhaps very well to

conſult him, and to take his word; but how am I, or others, who have not this witneſs in us, the better for it? If the firſt ages of the Church ſaw all the wonders related by the Gentleman, and believed, it ſhews at leaſt, in his opinion, that this ſtrong evidence was neceſſary to create the belief he requires; why then does he require this belief of us, who have not this ſtrong evidence?

Judge. Very well. Gentlemen of the Jury, you have heard the proofs and arguments on both ſides, and it is now your part to give a verdict.

Here the Gentlemen whiſpered together, and the Foreman ſtood up.

Foreman. My Lord, the cauſe has been long, and conſiſts of ſeveral articles, therefore the Jury hope you will give them your directions.

Judge. No, no; you are very able to judge without my help.

Mr. *A.* My Lord, pray conſider, you appointed this meeting, and choſe your office. Mr. *B.* and I have gone through our parts, and have ſome right to inſiſt on your doing your part.

Mr. *B.*

Mr. *B.* I muſt join, Sir, in that requeſt.

Judge. I have often heard, that all honour has a burden attending it; but I did not ſuſpect it in this office, which I conferred upon myſelf: But ſince it muſt be ſo, I will recollect, and lay before you, as well as I can, the ſubſtance of the debate.

Gentlemen of the Jury; the queſtion before you, is, whether the witneſſes of the Reſurrection of Chriſt are guilty of giving falſe evidence, or no.

Two ſorts of objections, or accuſations, are brought againſt them. One charges fraud and deceit on the tranſaction itſelf; the other charges the evidence as forged, and inſufficient to ſupport the credit of ſo extraordinary an event.

There are alſo three periods of time to be conſidered.

The firſt takes in the miniſtry of Chriſt, and ends at his death. During this period the fraud is ſuppoſed to be contrived.

The ſecond reaches from his Death to his Reſurrection. During this period the fraud is ſuppoſed to be executed.

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The third begins from the Reſurrection, and takes in the whole miniſtry of the Apoſtles. And here the evidence they gave the world for this fact is the main conſideration.

As to the firſt period of time, and the fraud charged upon Jeſus, I muſt obſerve to you, that this charge had *no* evidence to ſupport it; all the facts reported of Jeſus ſtand in full contradiction to it. To ſuppoſe, as the Council did, that this fraud might poſſibly appear, if we had any *Jewiſh* books written at the time, is not to bring proof, but to wiſh for proof; for as it was rightly obſerved on the other ſide, how does Mr. *A.* know there were any ſuch books? And ſince they are loſt, how does he know what was in them? Were ſuch books extant, they might probably prove beyond diſpute the facts recorded in the Goſpels.

You were told that the *Jews* were a very ſuperſtitious people, much addicted to prophecy, and particularly that they had a ſtrong expectation about the time that Chriſt appeared, to have a victorious Prince riſe among them. This is laid as the ground of ſuſpicion; and in fact, many impoſtors you are told, ſet up upon theſe notions of the people; and thence it is inferred

ferred that Chriſt built his ſcheme upon the ſtrength of theſe popular prejudices. But when this fact came to be examined on the other ſide, it appeared that Chriſt was ſo far from falling in with theſe notions, and abuſing the credulity of the people, that it was his main point to correct theſe prejudices, to oppoſe theſe ſuperſtitions; and by theſe very means, he fell into diſgrace with his countrymen, and ſuffered as one, who in their opinion, deſtroyed the law and the prophets. With reſpect to temporal power, ſo far was he from aiming at it, that he refuſed it, when offered: ſo far from giving any hopes of it to his Diſciples, that he invited men upon quite different terms; *To take up the croſs, and follow him.* And it is obſervable, that after he had foretold his Death and Reſurrection, he continued to admoniſh his Diſciples of the evils they were to ſuffer; to tell them that the world would hate them, and abuſe them; which ſurely to common ſenſe has no appearance that he was then contriving a cheat, or encouraging his Diſciples to execute it.

But as ill ſupported as this charge is, there was no avoiding it: it was neceſſity, and not choice,

miſſive confidence in the Divine wiſdom. What, then, ſhall man preſume that his weak and narrow underſtanding is ſufficient to guide him *into all truth*, without any need of *Revelation* or *Faith?* Shall he complain that *the ways of God are not like his ways*, and *paſt his finding out?* True philoſophy as well as true Chriſtianity, would teach us a wiſer and modeſter part. It would teach us to be content within thoſe bounds which God has aſſigned to us, *caſting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Chriſt* *.

* 2 Cor. x. 5.

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Author of The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity, &c.

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What the event of this caſe was, the ſame writer tells us. The guards ſaw the ſtone removed by Angels, and for fear they became as dead men: when they came to the city, they reported to the chief Prieſts what had happened: a council is called, and a reſolution taken to bribe the ſoldiers to ſay, that the body was ſtolen while they were aſleep; and the Council undertook to excuſe the ſoldiers to *Pilate*, for their negligence in falling aſleep when they were on duty.

Thus the fact ſtands in the original record. Now the Council for *Woolſton* maintains, that the ſtory reported by the ſoldiers, after they had been bribed by the chief Prieſts, contains the true account of this pretended Reſurrection.

The Gentleman was ſenſible of a difficulty in his way, to account for the credit which the *Jews* gave to the prediction of Chriſt; for if, as he pretends, they knew him to be an impoſtor, what reaſon had they to take any notice of his prediction? And therefore, that very caution in this caſe betrayed their concern, and ſhewed that they were not ſatisfied that his pretenſions were groundleſs. To obviate this, he

ſays,

ſays, that they had diſcovered before one great cheat in the caſe of *Lazarus*, and therefore were ſuſpicious of another in this caſe. He was anſwered, that the diſcovery of a cheat in the caſe before-mentioned, ought rather to have ſet them at eaſe, and made them quite ſecure as to the event of the prediction. In reply he ſays, that the chief Prieſts, however ſatisfied of the cheat themſelves, had found that it prevailed among the people; and to ſecure the people from being farther impoſed on, they uſed the caution they did.

This is the ſubſtance of the argument on both ſides.

I muſt obſerve to you, that this reaſoning from the caſe of *Lazarus* has no foundation in hiſtory: there is no pretence for ſaying, that the *Jews* in this whole affair had any particular regard to the raiſing of *Lazarus*: and if they had any ſuch juſt ſuſpicion, why was it not mentioned at the trial of Chriſt? There was then an opportunity of opening the whole fraud, and undeceiving the people. The *Jews* had a plain law for puniſhing a falſe prophet; and what could be a ſtronger conviction, than ſuch a cheat made manifeſt? Why then was this advantage loſt?

The Gentleman builds this obſervation on theſe words, *So the laſt error ſhall be worſe than the firſt.* But is there here any thing ſaid about *Lazarus?* No; the words are a proverbial form of ſpeech, and probably were uſed without relation to any particular caſe. But if a particular meaning muſt be aſſigned, it is more probable, that the words being uſed to *Pilate*, contained a reaſon applicable to him. Now *Pilate* had been drawn in to conſent to the crucifixion, for fear the *Jews* ſhould ſet up Jeſus to be their King in oppoſition to *Cæſar*; therefore ſay the chief Prieſts to him, if once the people believe him to be riſen from the dead, the laſt error will be worſe than the firſt; *i. e.* they will be more inclined and encouraged to rebel againſt the *Romans* than ever. This is a natural ſenſe of the words, as they are uſed to move the *Roman* Governor to allow them a guard. Whether *Lazarus* were dead or alive; whether Chriſt came to deſtroy the law and the prophets, or to eſtabliſh and confirm them, was of little moment to *Pilate*. It is plain, he was touched by none of theſe conſiderations; and refuſed to be concerned in the affair of Chriſt, till he was alarmed with the ſuggeſtions of danger to the

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Roman ſtate. This was the *firſt* fear that moved him; muſt not therefore the *ſecond* now ſuggeſted to him be of the ſame kind?

The next circumſtance to be conſidered, is that of the ſeal upon the ſtone of the ſepulchre. The Counſel for *Woolſton* ſuppoſes an agreement between the *Jews* and Diſciples about ſetting this ſeal. But for this agreement there is no evidence; nay, to ſuppoſe it, contradicts the whole ſeries of the hiſtory, as the Gentleman on the other ſide obſerved. I will not enter into the particulars of this debate; for it is needleſs. The plain natural account given of this matter, ſhuts out all other ſuppoſitions. Mr. *B.* obſerved to you, that the *Jews* having a guard, ſet the ſeal to prevent any combination among the guards to deceive them; which ſeems a plain and ſatisfactory account. The Counſel for *W.* replies, Let the uſe of the ſeals be what they will, it is plain they were broken; and if they were uſed as a check upon the *Roman* ſoldiers, then probably they conſented to the fraud; and then it is eaſily underſtood how the body was removed.

I muſt obſerve to you here, that this ſuſpicion agrees neither with the account given by

the Evangeliſt, nor with the ſtory ſet about by the *Jews*; ſo that it is utterly unſupported by any evidence.

Nor has it any probability in it. For what could move *Pilate*, and the *Roman* ſoldiers, to propagate ſuch a cheat? He had crucified Chriſt for no other reaſon, but for fear the people ſhould revolt from the *Romans*; perhaps too he conſented to place a guard upon the ſepulchre, to put an end to the people's hope in Jeſus; and is it likely at laſt that he was conſenting to a cheat, to make the people believe him riſen from the dead? The thing, of all others, which he was obliged, as his apprehenſions were, to prevent.

The next circumſtance inſiſted on as a proof of the fraud, is, that Jeſus roſe before the time he had appointed. Mr. *A.* ſuppoſes that the Diſciples haſtened the plot, for fear of falling in with multitudes, who waited only for the appointed time to be at the ſepulchre, and to ſee with their own eyes. He was anſwered, that the Diſciples were not, could not be concerned, or be preſent at moving the body; that they were diſperſed, and lay concealed for fear of the *Jews*: that haſtening the plot was of no uſe,

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for the Reſurrection happened whilſt the guards were at the ſepulchre; who were probably enough to prevent violence: certainly enough to diſcover it, if any were uſed.

This difficulty then reſts merely upon the reckoning of the time. Chriſt died on *Friday*, roſe early on *Sunday*. The queſtion is, whether this was riſing the third day according to the prediction? I will refer the authorities made uſe of in this caſe to your memory, and add only one obſervation, to ſhew that it was indeed the third day according as the people of the country reckoned. When Chriſt talked with the two Diſciples who knew him not, they gave him an account of his own crucifixion, and their diſappointment; and tell him, *To-day is the third day ſince theſe things were done**. Now this converſation was on the very day of the Reſurrection. And the Diſciples thought of nothing leſs than anſwering an objection againſt the Reſurrection, which as yet they did not believe. They recount only a matter of fact, and reckon the time according to the uſage of their country, and call the day of the Reſurrection *the*

* Luke xxiv. 21.

third day from the Crucifixion; which is a plain evidence, in what manner the *Jews* reckoned in this and like cafes.

As the objections in this cafe are founded upon the ftory reported by the *Jews*, and the *Roman* foldiers; Mr. *B.* in his anfwer, endeavoured to fhew from fome hiftorical paffages, that the *Jews* themfelves did not believe the ftory.

His firft argument was, that the *Jews* never queftioned the Difciples for this cheat, and the fhare they had in it, when they had them in their power. And yet who fees not that it was very much to their purpofe fo to do? To this there is no reply.

The fecond argument was from the treatment St. *Paul* had from king *Agrippa*, and his faying to St. *Paul*, *Almoft thou perfuadeft me to be a Chriftian.* A fpeech, which he reckons could not be made by a Prince, to one concerned in carrying on a known cheat. To this the Gentleman replies, that *Agrippa* never did become a Chriftian, and that no great ftrefs is to be laid upon his complaifance to his prifoner. But allowing that there was fomething of humanity and civility in the expreffion, yet fuch civility could hardly be paid to a known impoftor.

impoſtor. There is a propriety even in civility; a prince may be civil to a rebel, but he will hardly compliment him for his loyalty; he may be civil to a poor ſectary, but if he knows him to be a cheat, he will ſcarcely compliment him with hopes that he will be of his party.

The third argument was from the advice given by *Gamaliel* to the Council of the *Jews*, to let the Apoſtles alone, *for fear they themſelves ſhould be found to fight againſt God:* a ſuppoſition which the Gentleman thinks abſolutely inconſiſtent with his or the Counſel's being perſuaded, that the Apoſtles were guilty of any fraud in managing the Reſurrection of Chriſt.

The Gentleman replies, that *Gamaliel's* advice reſpected only the numbers of people deceived, and was a declaration of his opinion, that it was not prudent to come to extremities till the people were in a better temper. This deſerves conſideration.

Firſt, I obſerve, that *Gamaliel's* words are expreſs, *leſt ye be found to fight againſt God*, which reaſon reſpects God, and not the people. And the ſuppoſition is, that the *hand of God* might poſſibly be in this work: a ſaying which could not have come from him, or have been

received by the Council, if they had believed the Reſurrection to have been a cheat.

Secondly, it is remarkable, that the miracles wrought by the Apoſtles after the death of Chriſt, thoſe eſpecially which occaſioned the calling this Council, had a much greater effect upon the *Jews*, than even the miracles of Chriſt himſelf. They held out againſt all the wonders of Chriſt, and were perpetually plotting his death, not doubting but that would put an end to their trouble: but when after his death, they ſaw the ſame powers continue with the Apoſtles, they ſaw no end of the affair, but began to think in earneſt there might be more in it than they were willing to believe. And upon the report made to them of the Apoſtle's works, they make ſerious reflexion, *and doubted whereunto this would grow.* And though in their anger and vexation of heart, they thought of deſperate remedies, and were for killing the Apoſtles alſo, yet they hearkened willingly to *Gamaliel*'s advice, which, at another time, might have been dangerous to the adviſer. So that it appears from the hiſtory, that the whole Council had the ſame doubt that *Gamaliel* had, that poſſibly the hand of God might be in this thing. And could

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the *Jews*, if they had manifeſtly diſcovered the cheat of the Reſurrection a little time before, have entertained ſuch a ſuſpicion?

The laſt period commences at the Reſurrection, and takes in the evidence upon which the credit of this fact ſtands.

The Counſel for *Woolſton*, among other difficulties, ſtarted one, which, if well grounded, excludes all evidence out of this caſe. The Reſurrection being a thing out of the courſe of nature, he thinks the teſtimony of nature, held forth to us in her conſtant method of working, a ſtronger evidence againſt the poſſibility of a Reſurrection, than any human evidence can be for the reality of one.

In anſwer to this, it is ſaid, on the other ſide,

Firſt, that a Reſurrection is a thing to be judged of by men's ſenſes; and this cannot be doubted. We all know when a man is dead; and ſhould he come to life again, we might judge whether he was alive or no, by the very ſame means by which we judge thoſe about us to be living men.

Secondly, that the notion of a Reſurrection contradicts no one principle of right reaſon, interferes with no law of nature. And that who-

ever admits that God gave man life at firſt, cannot poſſibly doubt of his power to reſtore it when loſt.

Thirdly, that appealing to the ſettled courſe of nature, is referring the matter in diſpute, not to rules or maxims of reaſon and true philoſophy, but to the prejudices and miſtakes of men; which are various and infinite, and differ ſometimes according to the climate men live in; becauſe men form a notion of nature from what they ſee; and therefore in cold countries all men judge it to be according to the courſe of nature for water to freeze, in warm countries they judge it to be unnatural. Conſequently, that it is not enough to prove any thing to be contrary to the laws of nature, to ſay that it is uſually, or conſtantly, to our obſervation, otherwiſe. And therefore, though men in the ordinary courſe die, and do not riſe again, (which is certainly a prejudice againſt the belief of a Reſurrection) yet is it not an argument againſt the poſſibility of a Reſurrection.

Another objection was againſt the reality of the body of Chriſt after it came from the grave. Theſe objections are founded upon ſuch paſſages as report his appearing or diſappearing to the

the eyes of the Diſciples at pleaſure; his coming in among them when the doors were ſhut; his forbidding ſome to touch him, his inviting others to do it; his having the very wounds whereof he died, freſh and open in his body, and the like. Hence the Council concluded that it was no real body, which was ſometimes viſible; ſometimes inviſible; ſometimes capable of being touched, ſometimes incapable.

On the other ſide, it was anſwered, that many of theſe objections are founded on a miſtaken ſenſe of the paſſages referred to; particularly of the paſſage in which Chriſt is thought to forbid *Mary Magdalen* to touch him; of another, in which he calls to *Thomas* to examine his wounds; and probably of a third, relating to Chriſt's converſation with his Diſciples on the road, without being known by them.

As to other paſſages, which relate his appearing and diſappearing, and coming in when the doors were ſhut, it is ſaid, that no concluſion can be drawn from them againſt the reality of Chriſt's body: that theſe things might happen many ways, and yet the body be real; which is the only point to which the preſent objection extends: that there might be in this, and pro-

bably was, ſomething miraculous; but nothing more wonderful than what had happened on another occaſion in his life-time; where the Gentleman who makes the objection, allows him to have had a real body.

I mention theſe things but briefly, juſt to bring the courſe of the argument to your remembrance.

The next objection is taken from hence, that Chriſt did not appear publickly to the people, and particularly to the chief Prieſts and Rulers of the *Jews*. It is ſaid, that his commiſſion related to them in an eſpecial manner; and that it appears ſtrange, that the main proof of his miſſion, the Reſurrection, ſhould not be laid before them; but that witneſſes ſhould be picked and culled to ſee this mighty wonder. This is the force of the objection.

To which it is anſwered. *Firſt*, that the particular commiſſion to the *Jews* expired at the death of Chriſt, and therefore the *Jews* had, on this account, no claim for any particular evidence. And it is inſiſted, that Chriſt, before his Death, declared the *Jews* ſhould not ſee him, till they were better diſpoſed to receive him.

Secondly,

Secondly, that as the whole world had a concern in the Reſurrection of Chriſt, it was neceſſary to prepare a proper evidence for the whole world; which was not to be done by any particular ſatisfaction given to the people of the *Jews*, or their Rulers.

Thirdly, that as to the choſen witneſſes, it is a miſtake to think that they were choſen as the only perſons to ſee Chriſt after the Reſurrection; and that in truth many others did ſee him: but that the witneſſes were choſen as proper perſons to bear teſtimony to all people; an office to which many others who did ſee Chriſt, were not particularly commiſſioned. That making choice of proper and credible witneſſes, was ſo far from being a ground of juſt ſuſpicion, that it is in all caſes the moſt proper way to exclude ſuſpicion.

The next objection is pointed againſt the evidence of the Angels, and the women. It is ſaid, that hiſtory reports that the women ſaw young men at the ſepulchre; that they were advanced into Angels merely through the fear and ſuperſtition of the women: that at the beſt, this is but a ſtory of an apparition; a thing in times of ignorance much talked of, but

but in the days of knowledge never heard of.

In anſwer to this, it is ſaid, that the Angels are not properly reckoned among the witneſſes of the Reſurrection; they were not in the number of the choſen witneſſes, or ſent to bear teſtimony in the world; that they were indeed Miniſters of God appointed to attend the Reſurrection: that God has ſuch Miniſters, cannot be reaſonably doubted; nor can it be objected that they were improperly employed, or below their dignity, in attending on the Reſurrection of Chriſt: that we believe them to be Angels, not on the report of the women, but upon the credit of the Evangeliſt who affirms it. That what is ſaid of apparitions on this occaſion, may paſs for wit and ridicule but yields no reaſon or argument.

The objection to the women was, I think, only that they were women; which was ſtrengthened by calling them ſilly women.

It was anſwered, that women have eyes and ears as well as men, and can tell what they ſee and hear. And it happened in this caſe, that the women were ſo far from being credulous, that they believed not the Angels, and hardly believed.

believed their own report. However, that the women are none of the choſen witneſſes; and if they were, the evidence of the men cannot be ſet aſide, becauſe women ſaw what they ſaw.

This is the ſubſtance of the objections and anſwers.

The Counſel for the Apoſtles inſiſted further, that they gave the greateſt aſſurance to the world, that poſſibly could be given, of their ſincere dealing, by ſuffering all kinds of hardſhip, and at laſt death itſelf, in confirmation of the truth of their evidence.

The Counſel for *Woolſton*, in reply to this, told you, that all religions, whether true or falſe, have had their martyrs; that no opinion, however abſurd, can be named, but ſome have been content to die for it; and then concluded, that ſuffering is no evidence of the truth of the opinions for which men ſuffer.

To clear this matter to you, I muſt obſerve how this caſe ſtands. You have heard often, in the courſe of this argument, that the Apoſtles were witneſſes choſen to bear teſtimony to the Reſurrection; and, for that reaſon, had the fulleſt evidence themſelves of the truth of it; not merely by ſeeing Chriſt once or twice after

his

his death, but by frequent converſation with him for forty days together, before his aſcenſion. That this was their proper buſineſs, appears plainly from hiſtory, where we find, that to ordain an Apoſtle, was the ſame thing as *ordaining* one *to be a witneſs of the Reſurrection**. If you look further to the preaching of the Apoſtles, you will find this was the great article inſiſted on†. And St. *Paul* knew the weight of this article, and the neceſſity of teaching it, when he ſaid, *If Chriſt be not riſen our faith is vain.* You ſee then, that the thing which the Apoſtles teſtified, and the thing for which they ſuffered, was the truth of the Reſurrection: which is a mere matter of fact.

Conſider now how the objection ſtands. The Counſel for *Woolſton* tells you, that it is common for men to die for falſe opinions; and he tells you nothing but the truth. But even in thoſe caſes their ſuffering is an evidence of their ſincerity; and it would be very hard to charge men who die for the doctrine they profeſs, with inſincerity in the profeſſion. Miſtaken they may be; but every

* Acts i. 22.

† Acts ii. 2, 22, &c. iii. 10. iv. 10. v. 30.

miſtaken

miſtaken man is not a cheat. Now if you will allow the ſufferings of the Apoſtles to prove their ſincerity, which you cannot well diſallow: and conſider that they died for the truth of a matter of fact which they had ſeen themſelves, you will perceive how ſtrong the evidence is in this caſe. In doctrines and matters of opinion, men miſtake perpetually; and it is no reaſon for me to take up with another man's opinion, becauſe I am perſuaded he is ſincere in it. But when a man reports to me an uncommon fact, yet ſuch a one, as in its own nature is a plain object of ſenſe; if I believe him not, it is not becauſe I ſuſpect his eyes, or his ſenſe of feeling, but merely becauſe I ſuſpect his ſincerity. For if I was to ſee the ſame thing myſelf, I ſhould believe myſelf; and therefore my ſuſpicion does not ariſe from the inability of human ſenſes to judge in the caſe, but from a doubt of the ſincerity of the reporter. In ſuch caſes therefore their wants nothing to be proved, but only the ſincerity of the reporter; and ſince voluntary ſuffering for the truth, is at leaſt a proof of ſincerity; the ſufferings of the Apoſtles for the truth of the Reſurrection, is a full and unexceptionable proof.

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The Counſel for *Woolſton* was ſenſible of this difference, and therefore he added, that there are many inſtances of men's ſuffering and dying in an obſtinate denial of the truth of facts plainly proved. The obſervation is alſo true. I remember a ſtory of a man who endured with great conſtancy all the tortures of the rack, denying the fact with which he was charged. When he was aſked afterwards, how he could hold out againſt all the tortures? He anſwered, I had painted a gallows upon the toe of my ſhoe, and when the rack ſtretched me, I looked on the gallows, and bore the pain to ſave my life. This man denied a plain fact, under great torture, but you ſee a reaſon for it. In other caſes, when criminals perſiſt in denying their crimes, they often do it, and there is reaſon to ſuſpect they do it always, in hopes of a pardon or reprieve. But what are theſe inſtances to the preſent purpoſe? All theſe men ſuffer againſt their will, and for their crimes; and their obſtinacy is built on the hope of eſcaping, by moving the compaſſion of the Government. Can the Gentleman give any inſtances of perſons who died willingly in atteſtation of a falſe fact? We have had in *England* ſome weak enough to die

die for the Pope's ſupremacy: but do you think a man could be found to die in proof of the Pope's being actually on the throne of *England?*

Now the Apoſtles died in aſſerting the truth of Chriſt's Reſurrection. It was always in their power to quit their evidence, and ſave their lives. Even their bittereſt enemies, the *Jews*, required no more of them than to be ſilent *. Others have denied facts, or aſſerted facts, in hopes of ſaving their lives, when they were under ſentence of death: but theſe men atteſted a fact at the expence of their lives, which they might have ſaved by denying the truth. So that between criminals dying and denying plain facts, and the Apoſtles dying for their teſtimony, there is this material difference: criminals deny the truth in hopes of ſaving their lives; the Apoſtles willingly parted with their lives, rather than deny the truth.

We are come now to the laſt, and indeed the moſt weighty conſideration.

The Counſel for the Apoſtles having in the courſe of argument allowed, that more evidence is required to ſupport the credit of the

* Acts iv. 17. v. 28.

Reſur-

Reſurrection, it being a very extraordinary event, than is neceſſary in common caſes; in the latter part of his defence ſets forth the extraordinary evidence upon which this fact ſtands. This is the evidence of the ſpirit: the ſpirit of wiſdom and power, which was given to the Apoſtles, to enable them to confirm their teſtimony by ſigns and wonders, and mighty works. This part of the argument was well argued by the Gentleman, and I need not repeat all he ſaid.

The Counſel for *Woolſton*, in his reply, made two objections to this evidence.

The firſt was this; that the Reſurrection having all along been pleaded to be a matter of fact and an object of ſenſe; to recur to miracles for the proof of it, is to take it out of its proper evidence, the evidence of ſenſe; and to reſt it upon a proof which cannot be applied to it; for ſeeing one miracle, he ſays, is no evidence that another miracle was wrought before it; as healing a ſick man, is no evidence that a dead man was raiſed to life.

To clear this difficulty, you muſt conſider by what train of reaſoning miracles come to be proofs in any caſe. A miracle of itſelf proves nothing,

nothing, unleſs this only, that there is a cauſe equal to the producing the effect we ſee. Suppoſe you ſhould ſee a man raiſe one from the dead, and he ſhould go away and ſay nothing to you, you would not find that any fact, or any propoſition, was proved or diſproved by this miracle. But ſhould he declare to you, in the name of him, by whoſe power the miracle was wrought, that image-worſhip was unlawful, you would then be poſſeſſed of a proof againſt image-worſhip. But how? Not becauſe the miracle proves any thing, as to the point itſelf; but becauſe the man's declaration is authoriſed by him who wrought the miracle in confirmation of his doctrine. And therefore miracles are directly a proof of the authority of perſons, and not of the truth of things.

To apply this to the preſent caſe: if the Apoſtles had wrought miracles, and ſaid nothing of the Reſurrection, the miracles would have proved nothing about the Reſurrection, one way or other. But when as eye-witneſſes they atteſted the truth of the Reſurrection, and wrought miracles to confirm their authority; the miracles did not directly prove the Reſurrection, but they confirmed and eſtabliſhed beyond

beyond all ſuſpicion the proper evidence, the evidence of eye-witneſſes. So that here is no change of the evidence from proper to improper; the fact ſtill reſts upon the evidence of ſenſe, confirmed and ſtrengthened by the authority of the ſpirit. If a witneſs calls in his neighbours to atteſt his veracity, they prove nothing as to the fact in queſtion, but only confirm the evidence of the witneſs. The caſe here is the ſame; though between the authorities brought in confirmation of the evidence, there is no compariſon.

The ſecond objection was, that this evidence, however good it may be in its kind, is yet nothing to us. It was well, the Gentleman ſays, for thoſe who had it: but what is that to us, who have it not?

To adjuſt this difficulty, I muſt obſerve to you, that the evidence now under conſideration, was not a private evidence of the Spirit, or any inward light, like to that which the Quakers in our time pretend to; but an evidence appearing in the manifeſt and viſible works of the Spirit: and this evidence was capable of being tranſmitted, and actually has been tranſmitted to us upon unqueſtionable authority: and to allow the evidence to have been good in the firſt ages, and

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not in this, ſeems to me to be a contradiction to the rules of reaſoning. For if we ſee enough to judge that the firſt ages had reaſon to believe, we muſt needs ſee at the ſame time, that it is reaſonable for us alſo to believe. As the preſent queſtion only relates to the nature of the evidence, it was neceſſary to produce from hiſtory the inſtances to ſhew in how plentiful a manner this evidence was granted to the Church. Whoever wants this ſatisfaction, may eaſily have it.

Gentlemen of the Jury, I have laid before you the ſubſtance of what has been ſaid on both ſides. You are now to conſider of it, and to give your verdict.

The Jury conſulted together, and the Foreman roſe up.

Foreman. My Lord, we are ready to give our verdict.

Judge. Are you all agreed?

Jury. Yes.

Judge. Who ſhall ſpeak for you?

Jury. Our Foreman.

Judge. What ſay you? Are the Apoſtles guilty of giving falſe evidence in the caſe of the Reſurrection of Jeſus, or not guilty?

Foreman. Not guilty.

Judge.

Judge. Very well; and now, Gentlemen, I reſign my commiſſion, and am your humble ſervant.

The company roſe up, and were beginning to pay their compliments to the Judge and the Counſel; but were interrupted by a Gentleman, who went up to the Judge, and offered him a fee. What is this? ſays the Judge. A fee, Sir, ſaid the Gentleman. A fee to a Judge is a bribe, ſaid the Judge. True, Sir, ſaid the Gentleman: but you have reſigned your commiſſion, and will not be the firſt Judge who has come from the bench to the bar without any diminution of honour. Now *Lazarus*'s caſe is to come on next, and this fee is to retain you on his ſide. There followed a confuſed noiſe of all ſpeaking together, to perſuade the Judge to take the fee: but as the trial had laſted longer than I expected, and I had lapſed the time of an appointment for buſineſs, I was forced to ſlip away; and whether the Judge was prevailed on to undertake the cauſe of *Lazarus*, or no, I cannot ſay.

FINIS.

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